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The Calvinistic concept of
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The Calvinistic Concept of Culture

"In thy light shall we see light" (Ps. 36:9).

"And God blessed them: and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it; and have dominion . . ." (Gen. 1:28).

"Think not that I came to send peace on the earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword" (Matt. 10:34).

"That they may know the mystery of God, even Christ, in whom are all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge hidden" (Col. 2:2, 3).

"Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that is exalted against the knowledge of God, and bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ" (II Cor. 10:5).

"That in the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven and things on earth and things under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father" (Phil. 2:9, 10).

"Worthy art thou, our Lord and our God, to receive the glory and the honor and the power: for thou didst create all things, and because of thy will they are, and were created" (Rev. 4:11).

"And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: . . . And I heard a great voice out of the throne saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he shall dwell with them, and they shall be his peoples, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God; and he shall wipe away every tear from their eyes; and death shall be no more . . . the first things are passed away" (Rev. 21:1-4).

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The Calvinistic Concept of Culture

by
Henry R. Van Til

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To my wife — ELIZABETH

PREFACE

The term "culture" has meant many things to many people. In this book I use the term to designate that activity of man, the image-bearer of God, by which he fulfills the creation mandate to cultivate the earth, to have dominion over it and to subdue it. The term is also applied to the result of such activity, namely, the secondary environment which has been superimposed upon nature by man's creative effort. Culture, then, is not a peripheral concern, but of the very essence of life. It is an expression of man's essential being as created in the image of God, and since man is essentially a religious being, it is expressive of his relationship to God, that is, of his religion.

That man as a covenantal creature is called to culture cannot be stressed too much. For the Lord God, who called him into being, also gave him the cultural mandate to replenish the earth and to have dominion over it. David was so filled with ecstasy at this glory-filled vocation that he exclaimed in awe and wonder: "What is man, that thou art mindful of him? . . . For thou hast made him a little lower than God, And crownest him with glory and honor. . . . Thou hath put all things under his feet."

To say that culture is man's calling in the covenant is only another way of saying that culture is religiously determined. This fact has been quite generally recognized by such eminent cultural philosophers as Brunner, Tillich and Kroner. Tillich's *Theology of Culture* did not appear until the manuscript for this book had gone to the publishers, so that I was unable to react to it. However, although my purpose was not mainly polemical but historical, that is, to trace the rootage for what I choose to call the Calvinistic concept of culture, I may say that although I agree with the Existentialist theologians (Tillich, c.s.), that religion is an ultimate concern and lies at the heart of culture, my theology is worlds apart from theirs. A critical analysis of Tillich's existential concept of the Christ of culture merits separate treatment and is, personally, very appealing.

My thesis, then, is that Calvinism furnishes us with the only theology of culture that is truly relevant for the world in which we live, because it is the true theology of the Word. However, let no one conclude from the sometimes passionate affirmation of certain propositions that I consider my definition of Calvinistic culture definitive or conclusive. Rather, the author seeks by a tentative statement to elicit further explication and critical analysis, in order that the Calvinistic community may become increasingly articulate concerning culture and its religious roots. In that sense my efforts may be construed as contributing toward a definition of Calvinistic culture.

* * *

It is a real pleasure at this time to express my gratitude to Calvin College, its President, William Spoelhof, and its Board of Trustees, for granting a one-semester leave of absence for the purpose of writing this book. Without that initial impetus there would not have been time for such a thing. In the same breath, I wish to express my appreciation to the members of the Bible Department, my colleagues, who ungrudgingly carried an extra teaching load imposed by my absence. Further I am indebted to the library staff for the alacrity with which it supplied all my needs in the matter of research and procurement of documents.

Secondly, I wish at this time publicly, to express my filial gratitude to my father, a lay-theologian, who has addressed himself to his cultural milieu prophetically these fifty-five years since he arrived as an immigrant of twenty-one to seek opportunity for children then unborn. For he gave to me the first ingredients of a theological culture while we crawled along on our knees weeding onions, or as he explicated a passage from Scripture which he had read for our family devotions. Until his retirement at seventy-five he was engaged in the most elementary form of culture, namely, agriculture, which was to him a divine calling. And in all our moiling and toiling as an immigrant family to subdue the earth, Father never permitted us (there are ten brothers) to lose sight of the heavenly city, of the fact that making a living was secondary to the seeking of the Kingdom. And in the process of Christian nurture we were taught to discern the spirits to see whether they were of God.

Thirdly, my thanks are hereby offered to my uncle, Dr. Cornelius Van Til, my father's somewhat more illustrious younger brother, who was my mentor at an early age and later became my teacher and gave me some appreciation for the basic issues in theology and philosophy and introduced me to the Kuyperian concept of the antithesis, which is found in these pages. I have also profited from his encouragement and criticism.

Fourthly, I wish to express my appreciation to the Reverend E. E. Zetterholm and the Reverend R. J. Rushdoony, two friends who have carefully read my manuscript and made invaluable suggestions and corrections. And, for the final preparation of the manuscript in its finished form I wish to thank my sister-in-law, Mrs. Ruth Zandstra of Indianapolis, for her painstaking labor. It goes without saying, that whatever errors have crept into the manuscript are my responsibility.

Finally, last but not least, I thank my God for his gracious providence and his tender mercies, which have been new every morning, for energy and delight in labor to do the work which was involved. I thank God that he has called me to labor in his kingdom and by his grace seek to serve him day by day as he gives me strength. *CARPE DIEM! – CORAM DEO! PRO REGE!*

Henry R. Van Til

CONTENTS

Part I

Defining the Issue

Chapter 1 — Introduction: The Problem Stated.............. 15
Chapter 2 — The Concept of Culture...................... 25
Chapter 3 — The Relationship of Religion and Culture........ 37
Chapter 4 — Calvinism Defined............................ 47
Chapter 5 — The Calvinistic Conception of Sin and Its Effects on Culture.................................. 57

Part II

Historical Orientation

Chapter 6 — Augustine, the Philosopher of Spiritual Antithesis and Cultural Transformation.................... 67
Chapter 7 — John Calvin: Cultural Theologian and Reformer of the Whole of Life.............................. 89
Chapter 8 — Abraham Kuyper: Theologian of Common Grace and the Kingship of Christ.......................117
Chapter 9 — Schilder: Christ, The Key to Culture.............137

Part III

Basic Considerations toward a Definition

Chapter 10 — The Authority of Scripture in Calvinistic Culture..157
Chapter 11 — The Motivation of Faith in Calvinistic Culture...169
Chapter 12 — Calvinistic Culture and the Antithesis............179
Chapter 13 — The Calvinist and the World...................191
Chapter 14 — Calvinistic Culture and Christ's Mediatorial Kingship 205
Chapter 15 — Calvinistic Culture and Christian Calling.........217
Chapter 16 — Calvinistic Culture and Common Grace..........229

PART ONE
Defining the Issue

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION: THE PROBLEM STATED

The Christian is in the world, but not of the world. This constitutes the basis of the perennial problem involved in the discussion of Christian culture. Because believers are not of the world, there have always been many Christians who have taken a negative attitude toward culture. They understand the Christian's calling to consist exclusively in proclaiming salvation through Christ to lost men in a dying world. They see that dying world only as lying under the sentence of death and final judgment. Others, having eagerly accepted the Pauline assurance, "all things are yours," stress the fact that believers have a cultural calling here and now to subdue the earth as members of the human race. They also rejoice in the fact that they have so much in common with all men culturally, so that they can together enjoy things that are beautiful and follow after that which is good. Thus there is first of all a conflict among Christians on their attitude toward culture.

The problem of the proper relationship of Christianity to culture is further complicated by the catholic claims of the church. As a result, a second area of conflict appears, the church versus the world. God's people have ever confessed, on the basis of the proclamation of the Word, the catholicity of church and kingdom, namely the universal claims of the Gospel and its finality for all men as creatures of God. But, over against this, stands the fact that the "world lieth in the evil one" (I John 5:19) and is subject to the ruler of this world, Satan (John 14:30; 16:11), who is the "god of this age" (II Cor. 4:4). And the world knows not God, neither the children of God (I Cor. 1:21; John 17:25; I John 3:1, 13) but it hates the children of God (John 15:18-19; 17:14). Therefore the world must be opposed and overcome in faith by the followers of the Christ (I John 2:15-17; 5:4).

Moreover, Christianity is definitely the religion of cross-bearing and thus is again at odds with the world. Paul even speaks of having the world crucified to himself and himself being crucified to the world through Jesus Christ (Gal. 6:14). Jesus called sinners to repentance, summoning especially the poor and needy, publicans and prodigals. And his words of warning are uttered against those who trust in riches or any other cultural achievements. The apostle John warns against the allurements of this present world, the lust of the eyes, the lust of the flesh and the pride of life, for whoso loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him (I John 2:15-17). James designates those who are friends of this world as adulteresses. "Whosoever therefore would be a friend of the world maketh himself an enemy of God" (James 4:4). The *world,* against which the New Testament warned the primitive church, was forever impinging on the Christian's consciousness. The Christian could not close his eyes and mind to the Graeco-Roman culture of his day, with its amphitheatre and arena, its Pantheon and Parthenon, its forum and temples, its Stoicism and Epicureanism. Consider Paul's witness at Lystra and especially his address on Mars Hill. Among the Greeks there was aesthetic appreciation for the beautiful cosmos. Theirs was a purely pagan love of the body and the defense of its lusts as lawful. Further there was also the glorification of the mind as divine (Plato), idealistically expressed in the ideal of the beautiful soul in a beautiful body. Yet, there was an ultimate depreciation of matter and the body, and the sins thereof, because of the priority of the Idea. Thus Hellenistic culture stood in strong contrast and opposition to the standards of the Gospel, which called for a putting down of the body, a crucifying of the flesh, against the ultimate resurrection of the body and consequently, an appreciation of the significance of its present sins. Moreover, in contrast to the Greek aristocratic ideal, the Apostles required honest labor by all so that charity might be extended to all men, but especially that the household of faith should not suffer want. Thus, dignity and seriousness was again extended to the material world which Greek thought regarded lightly and amorally.

However, there was also another side to the picture given by Christianity itself, and one prominent in Holy Scriptures. The world, lying in the evil one, is the object of the grace of God and as his creation is salvable. God sent his Son into the world not to condemn the world, but that the world through him should be saved. The cosmos, as the glorious handiwork of the creator, who is Lord of heaven and earth, is redeemable. "God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself" (II Cor. 5:19). Christ, who is the light of the world (John 1:12), is also its Saviour (John 4:14), the lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world (John 1:29). For he was made "the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for the whole world" (I John 2:2). Through Christ all things are reconciled to the Father (Col. 1:20) so that finally the kingdoms of this world shall become the kingdoms of our God and of his Christ (Rev. 11:15). For there shall be a new heaven and a new earth in which righteousness shall dwell (II Peter 3:13), and the tabernacle of God shall be with men, "and he shall dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God: and he shall wipe away every tear from their eyes; and death shall be no more; neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain, anymore: the first things are passed away" (Rev. 21:3-5).

Such is the beautiful, poetic and exalted language in which the catholicity of Christianity is expressed in Scripture.[1] Although sin is recognized as universal, and death passed from Adam "upon all men, for that all have sinned" (Rom. 5:12) the grace of God is more abundant, "For if by the trespass of the one the many died, much more did the grace of God, and the gift by the grace of the one man, Jesus Christ, abound unto the many" (Rom. 5:15). And, "where sin abounded, grace did abound more exceedingly" (vs. 21). This must not be interpreted universalistically, as though all will now be saved willy-nilly through the abounding grace of God through Christ.[2] However, the grace of God restores men, namely those that become partakers of Christ through faith, to their pristine office of prophet, priest and king, unto the glorious liberty of the children of God. For the blood of Jesus Christ, God's Son, cleanseth us from all sin. But the Gospel does not merely promise a purified soul. The body also shall be resurrected and restored, for Christ shall take our vile bodies and make them like unto his glorious body by that power by which he is able to subject all things unto himself (Phil. 3:21). "Now are we children of God, but it doth not yet appear what we shall be, but we know that when he shall appear we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is" (I John 3:2). Then shall the New Jerusalem, that perfection of architectural artistry and moral excellence (no one shall enter that maketh and loveth a lie) descend among men, and all the songs of the redeemed shall be symphonies.

But this is not the total picture of redemption. The expectation of future glory and the joy of complete redemption has its counterpart here and now in its implications for the present life of the believer. For John adds that the children of God who have the hope of seeing their Lord purify themselves even as he is pure (I John 3:3). Christians are called unto holiness and are to be engaged actively in self-purification. They are to walk in good works which have been prepared before, unto which they have been called (Eph. 2:10). But how is it possible to visualize this activity of believers outside of their

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1. For this whole section on the catholicity of the church I am indebted to the brilliant rectoral address of Dr. H. Bavinck, delivered at the Theological School of the Reformed Churches of the Netherlands at Kampen, 1888: *De Katholiciteit van Christendom en Kerk* (Kampen, 1888).

2. Cf. H. Richard Niebuhr, *Christ and Culture* (New York, 1951), p. 208, who deplores Augustine's insistence on predestination as though this were a retreat from the doctrine that Christ is the transformer of culture. Also K. Barth's doctrine of predestination in which all are reprobate and also elect (*cf. Kirchliche Dogmatik,* II, 2, Zollikon-Zurich, 1942), in which reprobation is never final, for the wrath of God has fallen on Jesus Christ, hence men cannot attain unto final separation from God (II, 2, pp. 381-85).

culture? Is holiness perhaps restricted to the life of the soul? Or are holiness and purification a matter of cultus merely? To ask such questions is to answer them, since the Gospels and the Epistles insist throughout that men shall be known by their fruits, that faith without works is dead, that the quality of a man's conversion can be tested only by the purity of his life.

In the early post-apostolic church these two sides of the truth were not always kept in balance. The church was, indeed, small and without strength, despised by a hostile world. Because of heavy persecutions and the expectation of the speedy return of Christ to redeem them from the power of their enemies, they were acutely conscious of the antithesis with the world. Pagan culture was seen as a work of the devil, so that believers in the uneven struggle to remain pure in an impure society, rejected not merely the circus and the arena, but also science and philosophy. Although marriage was not condemned, the unmarried state was considered preferable, and the tendency toward asceticism was unmistakable. This came to expression in a marked way when Constantine proclaimed the Christianization of the empire, which made the church world-wide, but on account of which many serious-minded believers withdrew from the world. Such movements as the Montanists, Novationists, and Donatists testified against the rising tide of worldliness, but they went unheeded. This was due, in part, to their one-sided emphasis but also to the increasing worldliness of the church. The church succeeded in becoming a world-wide church, thus answering superficially, at least, to its catholic claims, but in the process its holiness and unity were lost. She did, however, grant, by way of concession, the right of existence to asceticism and monasticism within her walls, on the condition that the separatists did not claim to be the only true church. The result was that the qualitative antithesis between the church and the world, the holy and the unholy, disappeared and was changed into a quantitative one of good and better Christianity. Consequently the "world" lost the ethical connotation which it carries in Scripture, namely, its rebellion and separation from God, and became simply the secular sphere outside the church.

The world in this view is not corrupt because of the fall of Adam, but it has simply lost the *donum superadditum,* the supernatural gift of God's grace, now supplied by the church, in whose custody are the channels of grace. Nature as creation is not fallen and evil but only second best. Christianity is something added pyramidically to the natural, but it does not enter life like a leaven to transform it. Natural theology teaches us about God the Creator, Provider and Judge (Plato and Aristotle are true so far forth) but Scripture is necessary to know God in the face of Jesus Christ. Thus Rome, which claims for itself the appellation "Catholic," has changed New Testament catholicity, which purifies and sanctifies as its proper domain the whole of life, and has substituted in its place a dualism, which separates the supernatural from the natural. Salvation always remains beside or above the natural, but does not enter it to transform it; creation and re-creation remain two independent entities. Thus a compromise is achieved between nature and the supernatural, between body and soul, world and church, knowing and believing, mortality and religion. Roman Catholicism is the great system of supplementation. God's image supplements a neutral nature (something like the pagan idea of the *anima rationale* (rational soul); evangelical exhortations supplement moral precepts common to all mankind; tradition supplements Scripture. The church is the sphere of religion, the world is the area of the profane. Since church members cannot live in this world without moving in the secular sphere, an attempt is made to bring all the secular under the umbrella of grace wielded by the church, to insure the salvation of its members from the womb to the tomb, by baptism, confirmation, eucharist, penance, orders, marriage and extreme unction.

The Protestant Reformation did not merely seek to cleanse the church and deliver it from doctrinal errors, but it also sought the restoration of the whole of life. This entailed freeing man's natural life and the various spheres in society from the overlordship of the church. Whereas Humanism was an attempt to proclaim man's freedom from God and all authority, stressing autonomy versus heteronomy, the Reformers were united in their passion for the liberty of the Christian man, which meant subservience to the Word of the Lord. Only Christ was considered Lord of the conscience. For the Reformers the natural was holy as well as the spiritual, and the work of the Father in creation was considered of equal significance with that of the Son in redemption. Christ was for them, a cosmic Redeemer, the one through whom all things are restored to the Father. For God so loved *the world,* this created cosmos, that he gave his only begotten Son (John 3:16). The Reformers were advocates of a sound, healthy, robust Christianity; no eccentrics or odd fellows they, neither was anything human strange to them. Indeed, they took sin more seriously than the medieval church, believing that the whole man had been corrupted by the Fall and that the world was under the curse because of sin. However, they did not make the mistake of condemning things natural as though they were unholy; they believed in the restoration, purification and consecration of the natural, not its denial or castigation. Through the Reformation the mechanical relation of nature and grace was superceded by an ethical one, so that the restoration of the law of God in every sphere of life became the concern of the believer.

Tragically enough, the Reformation was not united in all these matters pertaining to culture, but a grievous disjunction became apparent. On the one hand, the Anabaptists in their quest for personal salvation and immunization against evil were eager to erect a kingdom of God upon earth wholly separated from the world. On the other hand, Luther told his disciples that Christ did not come to change anything externally but merely to change men's hearts. For him, the Gospel had nothing to do with worldly matters and the believer does not need the Holy Spirit for such natural things as business.[3] Hereby Luther put limits on the power of the Gospel and minimized the grace of God. Re-creation stands alongside of creation, since only man's inner life is changed by the Gospel. This typical Lutheran dualism has been continued in Germany unto this day, Barth and Brunner being its more vocal representatives.

Calvin, however, saw more clearly that religion and culture cannot be separated without suffering loss. For Calvin, grace was not a supplementation of nature as in Catholicism, not merely a spiritual power alongside of nature leaving the latter intact, but salvation to him was the renewal of the whole man and the restoration of all the works of God. At the same time, no one could accuse Calvin of cultural optimism, for the negative virtues of cross-bearing and self-denial indeed receive ample emphasis in his exposition of the Christian's duty in this world.[4] But whereas the German Reformation was primarily the restoration of true worship and the office of the ministry, Calvin sought the restoration of the whole of life, in home, school, state and society. For Luther the Bible was indeed the source of saving truth, but for Calvin Scripture was the norm for the whole existence.

It is not necessary to present a history of the struggle of Christianity versus culture or of the relationship of Christianity and culture as conceived by the great thinkers within the church.[5] The aim of this book is rather restricted to the consideration of the contemporary cultural crisis in the light of the Christian's vocation to love God with all his heart, soul, mind and strength. The cultural crises recorded in Holy Writ were always the result of apostasy. Witness the time of the judges, when there was no king in the land and every man did that which was good in his own eyes. Israel was so reduced that it had no weapon of war; there was no spirit to fight for freedom. But the true cause of this cultural degradation was departure from the service of God (cf. Judges 17-21; I Sam. 2:12-36) . A reference to the Babylonian captivity is really quite superfluous, and the cultural decay in the times of Christ was associated with Pharisaism and legalism. That ours is a religious crisis as well as a cultural one has been brilliantly set forth by Emil Brunner in the Gifford Lectures of 1947 at St. Andrews University, published under the title: *Christianity and Civilization.*

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[3] H. Bavinck, *op. cit.*, p. 30, who quotes Luther, "Christus ist nich gekommen, das er ausserlich etwas ändere, sondern dass der Mensch inwendig in Herzen anderswerde. Mit weltlichen Sachen hats (das Evengelium) nichts zu thun... Christus will jederman bleiben lassen; allein wer vorhin dem Teufel gedienet hat, der soll forthin ihm dienen."

[4] *Institutes of the Christian Religion,* III, Chaps. 6-10.

[5] Cf. Niebuhr, *op. cit.,* who gives an excellent review of the relationship of Christianity to culture in church history. Also Emil Brunner's philosophical analysis of a large number of cultural aspects from the point of view of their relationship to Christianity in his *Christianity and Civilization* (New York, 1948), 2 vols. There is also a magnificent five-volume work on the cultural history of Christianity produced by the combined efforts of various Dutch scholars, both Protestant and Catholic: *Cultuur Geschiedenis van het Christendom* (Amsterdam & Brussels, 1950).

It is the presupposition of the present author that what was good in Graeco-Roman culture was saved by Christianity at a point when it was threatened with decay and dissolution in the fulness of the time. Christ truly saved the world, including human culture. He injected new life, new blood, new vitality into the lifestream of humanity. Christ made men whole, he redeemed the cultural agents, thus transforming culture also. Moreover, the Protestant Reformation was the greatest revolution in human history since the introduction of Christianity. It too came at a time when culture was in crisis, and it gave Europe a new lease on life. And it was Calvinism that saved the Reformation, that made it effective in Western Europe and America. Calvinism had the courage, over against both Arminianism and Catholicism, to maintain the consistent supernaturalism of the Christian Scriptures, that is, to confess Christianity in its purest form without compromise.[6] In speaking of culture, the adjectival form of the term "Calvinism" is used in order to direct the reader's attention from the outset to a specific formulation of Christianity, since the latter term has become quite meaningless in our day. If the Neo-naturalism of the Chicago Divinity School passes for Christian, or the creed of Dr. Littlefair of Fountain Street Baptist Church in Grand Rapids, Michigan, can be called Christian, then the term has lost all historical connotation and one had better identify himself at the beginning. It goes without saying, furthermore, that the adjective is not genitive, does not indicate the source of a given culture, but is qualitative, indicating the nature of the culture here under discussion.

It is impossible in a work such as this to present a complete metaphysics and apologetics of Calvinism as a system of thought. They are assumed as live options for the contemporary Western mind: The impossible postulate of Positivism, namely of metaphysical neutrality, is hereby rejected, since neutrality is in itself a "kind of sceptical metaphysics" (cf. Brunner, *op. cit.,* Vol. II, p. 24). No man, scientist or otherwise, can work without presuppositions (*Es gibt Kein Voraussetzunglosigkeit*) and the present author's presuppositions are expressed in the Calvinistic world-view. What is understood by the term "Calvinism" will be set forth in Part One together with a tentative definition of culture. A discussion of the relation of religion to culture and the effects of the Fall bring the first section of the book to a close.

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[6] B. B. Warfield, *The Plan of Salvation* (Grand Rapids, 1925); also, H. Bavinck, "Openbaring en Culture," in *Wijsbegeerte der Openbaring* (Kampen, 1908), pp. 207-32.

The second part of this book presents a historical orientation of the Calvinistic conception of culture as set forth by Augustine, Calvin, Kuyper and Schilder, on the basis of their understanding of Scripture. The last two are both representatives of Dutch Calvinism, and hence have particular relevance for the Reformed community. But due to their germinal thinking on the problem of culture, an introduction of their thought to the average American scholar and interested layman can be of real value, since the language barrier is rather discouraging as well as regrettable.

Finally, the third section of the book seeks to set forth some conclusions, on the basis of the historical study and the data of Scripture, concerning the cultural duty of believers on the basis of their relationship to their covenant God in Jesus Christ. The author is greatly concerned about the alarming resurgence even in Reformed circles today of pietistic withdrawal from the world and the Anabaptistic denial of the Christian's cultural calling. Granted that the missionary mandate of the church, given in the great commission, ought to be its main concern, how does the believer show himself to be a recruit of Jesus Christ in his daily vocation? Does the twentieth-century disciple have a right to discard the cultural mandate, twice given to the human race by Jehovah himself? Are we justified in turning the world and culture over to the enemies of God? What is the world? Where does common grace fit into the picture? How must we think of the antithesis in connection with culture? How far does the kingship of Christ extend? Is the Gospel inimical to culture, or does it define man's true end? If so, then the whole man must seek the good, defined as such by the will of God. Should not the duty of man become his joy? Is not his task to be undertaken as a privilege? Does not love fulfil the law and thus set man free to enjoy the liberty of the sons of God?

Another evil that is threatening the church is simply a repetition of the great historical tragedy that followed the Constantinian proclamation (*vide supra*). There are those who would take the world into the church and others who would take the church into the world. On the one hand, the bars are let down and the absolute kingship of Christ is not maintained. People who will not forswear every other allegiance are nevertheless recommended for membership in the church. But John the apostle issues a stern warning against those who deny that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh, as is the case with Masons and other Modernists, saying that they are of the antichrist. There is a tendency abroad to reduce the requirements for church membership to accepting Christ apart from Christian culture. On the other hand, cultural optimism results in extravagant claims for the blessings of common grace which are supposed to be enjoyed promiscuously and without difference with the world. In this school of thought, the virtue of reason and its culture-producing quality is extolled. It is reason, we are told, that distinguishes man from the animal, that produces culture, that links man to the divine.

The Idealistic school puts its faith in the spiritual activity of man. It believes that reason as such elevates man and gives him a divine affinity with the large-minded men who produce our art and science. It is guilty also of the illusion that reason as such will produce truth, goodness and give men dignity and freedom. It forgets that spiritual activity as such and reason as well can be employed for diabolical as well as for godly ends. "The principle of the truly good human, of goodness and truth is higher than reason. It does not lie within the sphere of the formal, not in a *that,* but in a *what,* not in the possession and use of spiritual powers, but in the right use, in the right relation, in the right decision, in that self-determination which is according to God's will."[7]

Culture then, is not the criterion of our humanity, and cultural achievements do not restore man to his true end, witness Lamech's sons supplying their sire with the instruments for self-glorification. Men must become new creatures through Christ (II Cor. 5:21) in order to regain the true human perspective of that which is true, good, and beautiful. Culture, then, may be either godless or godly, depending on the spirit which animates it. Sin has not destroyed the creaturely relationship of man to his Maker, who made him a cultural creature with the mandate to replenish and subdue the earth. Sin has not destroyed the cultural urge in man to rule, since man is an image-bearer of the Ruler of heaven and earth. Neither has sin destroyed the cosmos, which is man's workshop and playground. Culture, then, is a must for God's image-bearers, but it will be either a demonstration of faith or of apostasy, either a God-glorifying or a God-defying culture. The thesis of this book is that if we confess to know God in the face of Jesus Christ, if we by grace have said, "in thy light we see light," then we cannot have true communion with the godless, apostatizing culture of our day, although we must associate with the men of the world. Indeed, we are in the world but not of the world.

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[7] E. Brunner, *op. cit.,* I, p. 69.

CHAPTER II

THE CONCEPT OF CULTURE

Culture is often conceived of too narrowly. The resulting definition lacks both scope and insight, breadth and depth. There are people, for instance, who identify culture with refinement of manners, social courtesy and urbanity, with the veneer of polite society. For others, it is synonymous with good taste in interior decorating, paintings, music and literature. But such individual culture is not conceivable without the culture of society as a whole, for the wholly cultured person is a phantasm, as T. S. Eliot reminds us.[1]

However, the idea that development of the artistic, scientific or social aspect of a man's nature constitutes culture is altogether too narrow. The whole man must be involved, and all the aspects of human life have a bearing on the issue. Therefore William T. Herridge is right when he says that "A thoroughly cultured person is one who is thoroughly matured in every part of his life, so that he is able to fulfill the purpose of his creation."[2] This is somewhat reminiscent of Matthew Arnold's famous idea that culture is the "pursuit of our total perfection by means of getting to know, on all the matters which most concern us, the best which has been thought and said in the world."[3] The culture recommended by Arnold is above all an inward operation, "disinterestedly seeking in its aim at perfection to see things as they really are" (*Ibid.,* p. 37). Culture, for Arnold, is a study of perfection, to make reason and the will of God prevail. But whereas both religion and culture say that human perfection is inward, culture goes beyond religion in seeking the harmonious development of all the powers which make for the beauty and worth of human nature (*Ibid.,* pp. 8-10).

Arnold, as even the liberals will admit today errs in two directions, namely, he conceives too narrowly of both religion and culture. For him, the dominant idea of religion is that of conquering the obvious faults of our animality and of human nature on the moral side (*Ibid.,* p. 19). However, religion, as will be demonstrated in the next chapter, is a far more "deep-down-diving and mud-upbringing" business than Arnold supposes.

With respect to culture, which indeed seeks perfection in the sense of fulfillment, Arnold is too naive when he speaks of it as sweetness and light. For culture is not the opposite of depravity. A society permeated by thought, sensible to beauty, intelligent and alive, does not necessarily meet the divine standard (cf. Paul, Romans 1:21ff.; 3:10ff.). Arnold's faith in Hellenistic culture as a cure for the anarchism of freedom for freedom's sake is pathetic. What Arnold as a Hellenist and as liberal intellectualist did not comprehend is the fact that intellectual contemplation and reason do not determine the course of a man's life, that they are not the mainsprings of action. He failed to accept the biblical doctrine that the issues of life are out of the heart (Prov. 4:23). He is accordingly basically sub-Christian in his thinking.

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[1] *Notes Toward a Definition of Culture* (New York, 1949), p. 21.

[2] "Culture," *The Presbyterian Review,* IX, p. 389, quoted by H. H. Meeter in *Calvinism* (Grand Rapids, 1939), p. 80.

[3] "An Essay on Political and Social Culture" in *Culture and Anarchy* (New York, 1897), p. XI.

Arnold failed to see that which is clearly seen and set forth by Emil Brunner, that culture as such cannot save us. Culture as such does not humanize a man, although it is true that without culture a man cannot be human. "Civilization and culture, then, are not in themselves the opposite of evil and depravity. They can become the very instruments of evil and negative forces, as they have always been to a certain extent . . . in themselves they do not guarantee the truly human character of life."[4]

Another serious flaw in Arnold's conception is his restriction of culture to the improvement and perfection of man himself. It is thoroughly humanistic, man-centered. There is no appreciation in it of man's calling to subdue the universe and to rule over it for God's sake. Arnold deplored the fact that the university should produce engineers, miners, architects and fails to produce sweetness and light. In this respect, he is of one mind with Newman who sees the goal of a liberal education as the production of gentlemen, of scholars, and of refinement in general. But this does not achieve the very aim that these scholars speak of in glowing terms, namely, of seeing life whole, of achieving integration and unity of character. For culture concerns man's environment as well as himself. It is not merely that which makes life worth living, but it includes all the characteristic activities of a people.[5]

Furthermore, culture, in the sense of this book, is not the achievement of our contemporary Western world alone. Cultural anthropologists have taught us that even though Western civilization has not penetrated to a given area, every primitive people has its own peculiar culture.[6] To the extent that man solves his nutritional, reproductive and hygienic problems by producing a secondary environment and transmitting this to the following generation, he has a culture. There are also custom, tradition, order and law — all ways of sanctioning human conduct. Besides, since the material substratum must be maintained, every culture also has some kind of economic organization.[7] Culture, then does not belong exclusively to the so-called *civilized* nations, but is the activity of man as image-bearer of his Creator in forming nature to his purposes. Man is a cultural creature, and civilization is merely the external side of culture.

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[4] *Christianity and Civilization,* Vol. II (New York, 1949), p. 129.
[5] T. S. Eliot, *op. cit.,* pp. 26, 30.
[6] E. B. Tylor, *Primitive Culture* (London, 1891).

However, our negative delineation is not yet complete. Culture is not something neutral, without ethical or religious connotation. Human achievement is not purposeless but seeks to achieve certain ends, which are either good or bad. Since man is a moral being, his culture cannot be a-moral. Because man is a religious being, his culture too, must be religiously oriented. There is no pure culture in the sense of being neutral religiously, or without positive or negative value ethically. Although the realization of values in a culture may seem on the surface to be concerned merely with the temporal and the material, this is appearance only, for man is a spiritual being destined for eternity, exhaustively accountable to his Creator-Lord. All that he does is involved in the whole of his nature as man. It certainly appears as if the search for value is dominated by man's ego-centricity, that it is purely anthropocentric, yet there is a deeper dimension to man's being, which is vitally involved in his activity as cultural creature. This question is worthy of separate treatment.[8] It may be asked, says Eliot, whether culture is not the incarnation of a people's religion (*Op. cit.,* p. 26).

Culture, however, does not include religion. The notion that it does is the basic error of practically all our cultural anthropologists, which fact may be ascertained by perusing casually any standard work on anthropology by such authors as Vander Leeuw, Malinowsky and others.[9] Also, Matthew Arnold gives the impression that culture is more inclusive than religion. But the basic assumption underlying this position negates Christianity and is thoroughly naturalistic. For the position of the cultural anthropologist is that religion is simply a projection of the human spirit, an attempt to manipulate the unseen by magic, or, in any case, that man creates the gods in his own image, thus making it a cultural achievement. This is also the general attitude of the religious liberal, who uses religion for achieving man's ideal goals such as world peace, a world without fear, a world without want, a blessed society of one kind a mere function of the community or of the state.... Religion is or another in which all men are happy. "Thus religion has become being regarded more and more as a mere means to a higher end."[10]

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[7] Bronislaw Malinowski, *A Scientific Theory of Culture and Other Essays* (Univ. of North Carolina Press, 1944), pp. 36-40.

[8] See the next chapter and the third part of this book in which this basic presupposition will be further explicated and motivated.

[9] Cf. John A. Hutchinson, *Faith, Reason, and Existence* (New York, 1956), p. 207, where the author maintains that culture may be "dissected into significant parts—law, government, religion, technology. . . ."

The reason religion cannot be subsumed under culture is the fact that whereas man as a religious being transcends all his activities under the sun, culture is but one aspect of the sum total of these activities and their results in forming history. Although a given culture does form the individual man, nevertheless man as cultural being precedes his culture and is the creator of culture. But religious faith is necessary to understand human destiny. And man in his faith is covenantally related to a Being that is transcendent, and, because of this covenental relationship, which constitutes true religion, man has an eternal destiny, which transcends culture. The meaning of life does not lie in culture as such, but culture derives its meaning from man's faith in God; it is never an end in itself, but always a means of expressing one's religious faith.[11] Of course, it ought to be clearly understood that this position does not deny the influence of culture on religion, which is patent to anyone acquainted with the various forms of worship among Protestants of different lands, and the many expressions of religion in paganism. Religion has developed its own peculiar institutions which are culturally formed, its habits and customs, norms, manner dogmas, discipline, and places of worship. It has used various arts in worship as music, dance, sculpture and architecture. All this simply indicates the close relationship of the two, but gives no ground for classifying religion under culture.

It now becomes imperative to define culture more positively. Brunner in his Gifford lectures uses the terms *culture* and *civilization* interchangeably, and in ordinary parlance this is the accepted usage. However, *civilization* may be used in a narrower sense when it is used to designate the "more advanced, perhaps more urban, technical and even senescent forms of social life."[12] It is preferable, however, to speak of culture, in distinction from civilization, which points to a degree of cultural development, as the total human effort of subduing the earth together with its total achievement in fulfilling the creative will of God. When the great Creator at the end of his work-week pronounced all things good, he had not brought them to the fulfillment of perfection. But he made man his co-laborer and God blessed him and said: "Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the heavens, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth" (Gen. 1:28). Besides, God gave man the power over and use of all plants, trees, animals, and every living thing. And when Adam was placed in Paradise he was commanded to dress (cultivate and work) and keep the garden of Eden. After the flood, when God made his covenant with Noah and in him with the whole human race, we read: "And God blessed Noah and his sons, and said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth" (Gen. 9:1). Furthermore God made the animal world subservient to man, and gave him the prerogative of using anything and everything for good, restricting him only in the matter of eating animal food with the blood. And, at the same time, God instituted a central authority to execute the murderer among men (Gen. 9:6). The Bible also tells us about the earliest cultural development in the family of Cain, namely, the building of a city, the invention of musical instruments, the sword, the movable dwelling. Naturally, speech is not the result of culture, for the Bible represents man as an image-bearer of God, who has received the gift of speech with his creaturehood. This does not mean, however, that speech is not subject to cultural forms and that there was no room for improvement or development, for example, in the art of oratory and persuasion.

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[10] J. Gresham Machen, *Christianity and Liberalism* (Grand Rapids, 1946), pp. 150, 151.

[11] Emil Brunner, *op. cit.*, Vol. II, pp. 132, 133; cf. also B. E. Meland, *Faith and Culture* (New York, 1953), p. 47.

Note: The fact that I quote from the works of these theologians, both of whom, among many others referred to in this book, deny the orthodox, Christian faith, does not imply my approval of their theology, but in this formal matter of the place of culture and religion they are, to my mind, correct. And there are many statements of Brunner and Niebuhr *et al.*, with which one can agree, so far forth, although one would reject their philosophic presuppositions and their system of theology.

[12] H. Richard Niebuhr, *Christ and Culture* (New York, 1951), p. 32; also Christopher Dawson, *Religion and Culture* (New York, 1947), p. 47.

Originally, the term "culture" did not have the wide connotation which it carries today. It is derived from the Latin "colere," which simply signifies the tilling or cultivating of the ground. This is the idea of Scripture when we read that God placed Adam in the garden to "dress" it. It denotes the labor bestowed upon the earth to prepare it for seeding (Gen. 2:15). Man was to belabor the good earth so that under the blessing of God it might bring forth its fruit. This we call *agriculture.* We also speak of the tending of bees as *api-culture,* that of birds as *avi-culture* and of horses *equi-culture.* This list could be extended indefinitely, inasmuch as man has brought the world of created things under cultivation and exploitation. Today we use the word "culture" of any human labor bestowed on God's creation in its widest sense, including man himself (voice culture, physical culture, etc.), by which it receives historical forms and is refined to a higher level of productivity for the enjoyment of man. Culture, then, is any and all human effort and labor expended upon the cosmos, to unearth its treasures and its riches and bring them into the service of man for the enrichment of human existence unto the glory of God.

As such, culture is always a human enterprise. The animal is not a cultural creature. Animals do not live by any other laws than those of instinct, and those instincts produce the same results perennially and always. A city is the product of culture, but a beehive and an ant hill are not. "Whatever astonishing analogies to human culture may be found in the life of animals — the beaver dam, the state of the ants, the so-called language and games of animals — they are mere analogies and not beginnings of culture and civilized life. They are all tied to biological necessities, as nourishment, procreation, and shelter. Man alone can transcend these necessities by his creative imagination, and by the idea of something which is not yet but ought to be: by the ideas of the good, of justice, beauty, perfection, holiness, and infinitude."[13]

We ought to be very clear on this distinction between man and the animal, especially in view of the fact that it is becoming common usage to speak of man as belonging to the animal kingdom. There is no justification for this from the Christian, the biblical point of view. It is true, of course, that the Latin Fathers spoke of the *animal rationale* (rational soul) and the Bible speaks of man as a *living being* just as it refers to animals as *living beings,* but this is a long cry from the evolutionistic, naturalistic way of thinking, in which man is reckoned a separate species in the animal world, on the basis of his anatomical, physiological, and biological resemblance. This is certainly not a scriptural way of thinking or of expressing oneself, and no amount of scientific pressure ought to lead the child of God at this point to kow-tow to the world. For here the antithesis is clearly evident. This is not merely a matter of facts and observation, but of true interpretation which is a matter of faith.

Rather, one ought to begin from the other end. Man is a spiritual being, he is so constituted that he lives in covenantal relationship to the Creator. He was created in the image of God. As such, he is morally responsible for his actions and duty-bound to seek the good; he is also rationally able to comprehend the meaning of life and duty-bound to function in the realm of truth; he is a cultural creature, one who is able and is called to re-create, to re-produce, to form artistically and to mould creation to his will, duty-bound to function in the realm of power, to seek harmony and beauty and to have dominion over the earth. This magnificent creature is a replica, an analogue of the blessed Tri-unity who made him. Thus man as rational creature reflects the eternal Son, who is the Truth, Wisdom and the Revealer of God. As moral creature, functioning in the realm of the holy, man is a reflection of the Spirit of holiness and of santification, through whom all things are inspired and invigorated. And as cultural creature, man is an analogue to the Father, who is King forever, who created the world by his power. However, man functions in these various spheres in the unity of his office, as God's representative. Thus man was placed in this created world to have dominion in the name of God, to bring to fruition and fulfillment this glorious cosmos, to rule over all for God's sake. This was his office, his trust, his obligation. This office has three facets: prophet, priest and king, which can never function separately but only in unity and concert. For it is man as prophet who knows the truth and as priest who loves his God, who is called as king to subdue the universe and to have dominion over it.

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[13] E. Brunner, *op. cit.,* II, p. 127.

How pathetically inadequate scientifically, and religiously irresponsible, to call this glorious creature, who is a little lower than God (Ps. 8:5), and to whom the angels are ministering spirits (Heb. 1:14), an animal. And it is simply a lame defense to say, "well, zoologically speaking, man is an animal." This is pure redundance and has no definitory significance whatsoever. Man may have a body resembling an animal, he may have functions like animals, but there is a great gulf between man and the animal that cannot be bridged. Brunner reminds us that "even where man is tied to biological necessity he acts in a way which transcends mere utility and gives his doing a human stamp. He does not 'feed' like the animals, he eats; he ornaments his vessels, his instruments, his house, he establishes and observes customs, he explores truth irrespective of utility, he creates beautiful things for the sheer joy of beauty" (*Ibid.,* Vol. II, pp. 127, 128). Man lives by ideas and ideals; he is a creature of faith. His spirit transcends the physical and biological necessity and is the formative force that creates culture.

One ought also to observe the difference between the instinctive acts of an animal and the cultural acts of man. The former remain unchanged from generation to generation, but man as creature, making history, develops his work and himself in that work. Although there may be some external resemblance between man and the animal, between the cultural striving of the one and the instinctive labors of the other, basically they are totally different. Man is free. The animal is bound, he is restricted by the law of instinct. A wasp, for example, has been stinging his caterpillar victims throughout the centuries in the self-same way, but a surgeon improves his methods and his tools from age to age; besides he has the choice of being that surgeon or a farmer, or whatever he chooses. Birds build their nests according to a pattern that is instinctive, but man has developed his construction methods from the primitive shelter to the marvels of architecture found throughout the world. And, as was intimated above, animals have no other recognizable aim than fulfilling biological necessity; but man has a spiritual purpose, he has a culture-transcending ideal, and his very culture reveals him as a being that transcends nature and the temporal. Therefore, it is inconceivable that any part of his culture, namely science in this instance, can define man in his essence or his totality; for science itself is an expression of man, an aspect of his cultural transformation of nature. Man as cultural being creates science, but science in one of its facets, in this case, biology, cannot define man.

Culture, it ought to be observed, is a social enterprise; it is not achieved in isolation, but through the interaction and cooperation of men in communion. Of course, it is possible for some lone Robinson Crusoe to fashion things and have a form of civilized life, but he was able to set up shop because of his past cultural training and the many cultural objects salvaged from the shipwreck. The family is the simplest and smallest unit of society and the real fountain of culture. If this fountain remains pure, man's culture has promise; but if it becomes polluted, all the rest will turn to dust and ashes, since the home is the foundation of the entire social structure. "Therefore, it is not impersonal spiritual activity," says Brunner, "it is not spiritual creation as such, but it is the formation of truly personal social relationships, which is the basis of true culture. There is more real culture in a truly human family life without art and science than in the highest achievements of art and science on the basis of neglected family life and degenerate sex relations" (*Ibid.*, II, p. 133).[14] Culture, then, takes in the whole man, not merely as an individual, but as member of the human organism, and therefore, in his various relationships to other men, and in the different institutions that are thus called into existence, the institution of the home, of society, with its relationships between employer and employee, capital and labor, commerce and industry, education and science, politics and government.

Culture has been defined as human and social. A river is nature, but a canal is culture; speech is nature, but a Shakespearian drama is culture; a horse is nature, but a five-gaited trotter is culture; a razorback is nature, but a purebred Duroc Jersey boar winning blue ribbons at a fair is culture; and thus one could continue. However, as individuals finding ourselves within the cultural stream, we are formed by it. Culture is the secondary environment by which we are formed, and it is inescapable. This is involved in the fact that culture and social existence are inseparable. Culture influences the individual through custom, which is the social aspect of habit. The more primitive the culture, the more absolute the authority of custom. However, no man is totally determined by custom in his culture, since he is himself a moral agent, able to act and to form the culture, to impregnate it with new ideas and ideals, and to reinvigorate its languishing spirit. Furthermore, the variety of cultural patterns is not merely a reflection of the varying times and climes but also of man's freedom as cultural agent and subject.

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[14] Cf. K. Schilder, *Christus en Cultuur* (Franeker, 1953), p. 73.

It has already been mentioned, in our negative delineation, that culture is never neutral, but it must be patent to all that culture is concerned with ends. Culture is concerned with the world of values and all "Cultures are irreducibly value-oriented."[15] For by culture we do not merely understand the historical action of man and his moulding power in subduing the earth and bringing it to the fullest fruition, but culture also comes to expression in definite patterns of life which portray certain ideals. The Greeks, of course, furnish us with an excellent example of culture in this sense. They spoke of the beautiful soul in the beautiful body as the highest aim of human culture. They were Humanists and pagan, altogether this-worldly in their cultural aspirations. So, too, modern man, whether consciously or unconsciously, is seeking for the perfect man in a perfect society, and in the end, this society must have as habitat a perfect world, which is being prepared by modern science. The ends that man envisions in his cultural striving transcend the biological, the economical, and the purely social, inasmuch as man is a moral and spiritual being.

In this sense culture has a perspective that transcends man, a zone that reaches out to the divine.[16] Niebuhr says that it is not only conceivable but also evident that men in their culture labor and produce for causes transcending human existence (*Op. cit.,* p. 35). It is especially true of primitives that culture for them is a sacred activity, an exercise in the sphere of religion.

There is, indeed, a sensitivity in the natural man's cultural striving, a sense of deity, even a yearning for the things of the spirit. However, in his apostate condition, the demands of life and the pragmatic tendency to do all for his own enjoyment is so great that culture tends to become a totally this-worldly concern. Hence we may say that apostate culture in all its forms is concerned with the temporal and material realization of values. Man seeks to realize in this world that which is good for himself as a being within time. He transforms nature, he uses animals and cultural objects not merely to satisfy his basic needs, but also to impress his idea and ideals upon matter. He longs for truth, beauty, and goodness and expresses this longing in music, poetry, painting, and gives expression to his spiritual aspiration by building cathedrals, mosques, or pagodas. He has visions of ernments, and orderly daily living. However, the cultural urge in order and justice and expresses them in written laws, organized gov- man is not satisfied in supplying human existence with modern conveniences, in furnishing entertainment and amusement to man. As was intimated above, man strives to be master of the world, ruler of all that he surveys, king of the universe; he would be lord and sovereign over all that exists under the sun.

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[15] John A. Hutchison, *Faith, Reason, and Existence* (New York, 1956), p. 209.

[16] C. A. Van Peursem, *Cultuur en Christelyk Geloof* (Kampen, 1953), p. 48.

Now it ought to be clear that the biblical answer is the only one that explains this urge and this sense of calling in modern man. For culture is the fulfillment of purposive moulding of nature in execution of the creative will of God.[17] Man as cultural creature is an analogue of the great Architect and Artist of the universe. Man as creature, therefore, is co-worker with God in bringing creation to its fulfillment. He is not, of course, a collaborator, but neither is he a blind fool. Man is an instrument who is conscious of what he is doing. But due to the fall of man into sin, he is no longer willing to admit the claims of his creator or to serve God.The results of sin, however, must wait for a further discussion, but it is because of man's fall that his culture is apostate and in the state of continual crisis. But, culture, as such, is a gift of God to man as well as an obligation. The Germans have a word for it, *Gabe und Aufgabe.* Thus man was at once servant and child. Man stood in that relationship to his Maker, wherein he knew God as his friend, and loved him as his Father. At the same time he had received dominion over all God's created world, to be lord and master in the name of his God. Unto this end he was to populate the earth with his kind and to cultivate it. This was not a matter of choice but of divine precept and it entered into the very constitution of man, so that man is essentially a cultural being. The cultural urge, the will to rule and to have power is increated. This is not demonic, or satanic, but divine in origin. True, men may misuse and abuse power after the entrance of sin into the world, but to say with Lord Acton that all power corrupts and that absolute power corrupts absolutely, which is quoted promiscuously by men who ought to know the Scriptures, is not wisdom but folly and confusion. For power belongs to man by virtue of his creation as a cultural creature. He was made to function in the realm of power and to develop his power to its highest potency — for God, of course! There's the rub! Men continually forget the divine original in Paradise and take the condition of Paradise lost for granted as being normative.

However, if one would truly appreciate the meaning of culture and its supreme importance to the human race, one must not forget that man's cultural instinct and calling can never be divorced from his covenant relationship to the Creator. For in that covenant, which we call religion, man was called to love the Lord with all his heart, soul, mind, and strength. For man, the cultural creature, is also God's prophet, who must speak the truth concerning reality and proclaim the glory of his Maker. He was also a priest unto his God, called to vocalize the praise of his creator and to say for all the inanimate and animate creation: "My God, how wonderful Thou art!" That is to say, man's development of nature and of himself was not for himself but for God, and for his glory. "For of him and through him and unto him are all things, to whom be the glory forever" (Rom. 11:36).

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[17] Leon G. Wencelius, "The Word of God and Culture" in *The Word of God and the Reformed Faith* (Grand Rapids, 1942), p. 160.

Without anticipating a point to be developed in Chapter Five, it may be observed that, when the works of man lose this ultimate goal, they do not lose their cultural character, but they may be designated as apostate culture, since the true direction of man's labor under the sun has been lost. In the state of rectitude, then, man has the urge (will), the calling (must), the privilege (may), but also the power (can) to execute the creative mandate of God. Man was motivated by love to execute the creative will of God. Through sin he has lost that motivation and consequently the goal of this culture is perverted. Instead of serving God he now serves himself. This is idolatry and rebellion! In all that he does he lives in sin, so that the very plowing of the wicked is sin (*cf.* Prov. 21:4). For he lives in enmity against his Maker, he is a rebel in the royal army, a poacher in the royal forest; for he is unwilling to give what is due to the Creator, hence his is an apostate culture. But in Christ all things are reconciled to the Father (Col. 1:14), including culture. Christ is the great renewer of life; he restores true religion. Culture which, in the words of T. S. Eliot (*Op. cit.,* p. 30) is "lived religion" is also restored since it is the form that religion takes in the lives of men.[18]

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[18] Paul Tillich, *The Protestant Era* (Chicago, 1948), p. 57.

CHAPTER III

THE RELATIONSHIP OF RELIGION AND CULTURE

Religion is the inescapable covenantal relationship between God as Lord and his image-bearer, man. This relation follows from that other basic one of Creator and creature, and rests upon the faithfulness of God to the covenant which he ordained as constituting the religious relationship. This relationship extends to the whole of life; it is all-permeating; it radiates from its center in the heart out to every area on the periphery of man's existence. And religion is a universal phenomenon; no people has ever been found without religion.[1] Through sin man fell away from God and his religion became apostate, but through Christ man is restored to true religion.

It is therefore more correct to ask what the role of culture is in religion than to put the question the other way around, as Hutchison does, "What is religion's role in culture?"[2] For man, in the deepest reaches of his being, is religious; he is determined by his relationship to God. Religion, to paraphrase the poet's expressive phrase, is not of life a thing apart, it is man's whole existence. Hutchison, indeed, comes to the same conclusion when he says, "For religion is not one aspect or department of life beside the others, as modern secular thought likes to believe; it consists rather in the orientation of all human life to the absolute" (*Ibid.*, p. 211). Tillich has captured the idea in a penchant line, "Religion is the substance of culture and culture the form of religion."[3]

The Westminster Shorter Catechism maintains at the outset that man's chief end is to glorify God and to enjoy him forever. However other-worldly this may sound to some, Presbyterians have interpreted this biblically to mean that man is to serve God in his daily calling, which is the content of religion. This service cannot be expressed except through man's cultural activity, which gives expression to his religious faith. Now faith is the function of the heart, and out of the heart are the issues of life (Prov. 4:23). This is the first principle of a biblically oriented psychology.

No man can escape this religious determination of his life, since God is the inescapable, ever-present *Fact* of man's existence. God may be loved or hated, adored or debased, but he cannot be ignored. The sense of God (*sensus deitatis*) is still the seed of religion (*semen religionis*). All of primitive religion is corroboration of the cry of the Psalmist, "Whither shall I go from thy Spirit? Or wither shall I flee from thy presence?" (Ps. 139:7).

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[1] William Howells, *The Heathens—Primitive-Man and His Religions* (Garden City, N. Y., 1948), p. 11.

[2] John A. Hutchison, *Faith, Reason and Existence* (New York, 1956), p. 210.

[3] Paul Tillich, *The Protestant Era* (Chicago, 1948), p. 57.

From the secularist's point of view, the religious interest of man, although it may be conceded to be important, is merely one of his interests in life. Therefore, from his point of view, to define man in terms of this relationship is arbitrary. For, although man is undeniably concerned with God (the numinous realm), he is also related to nature and to the whole world of the spirit. The answer to this view is that man in all his other relationships is engaged within the cosmos; to use Solomon's telling phrase, man is busy in his culture *under the sun* (Eccl. 1:4). But man's relationship to God, according to Scripture, is trans-cosmical and supra-temporal. For God is not only immanent in the world, he also transcends creation and time, giving man the promise of fellowship with him in eternity. The religious relationship is not terminated by death, as is the marital relationship, in which the partners promise their troth "till death do us part." In his presence is fullness of joy; this is the blessed promise of Christianity. Whereas death ends all of our works and our relationships *under the sun,* it is at the same time the transition into the stage of fulfilled communion of which David testifies, "As for me, I shall behold thy face in righteousness; I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with beholding thy form" (Ps. 17:15), "and I shall dwell in the house of Jehovah forever" (Ps. 23:6). Paul testifies that for him to live is Christ, but to die is gain (Phil. 1:21).

It is quite true, of course, that one may abstract one aspect of man as a *Gegenständ* (object) for scientific purposes and speak of the biological, psychological, social, historical, juridical, economic, aesthetic, moral, or pistical (from Greek *pistis*—faith) functions of man. However, none of these properly define man. He is more than any and more than all of these combined, for underneath and within these aspects there is the principle of unity that integrates the whole being as personal. That core of man's being, that irreducible center, that concentration point of all man's functions which transcends time is called the "heart" according to Scripture (Prov. 4:23; 23:26). The heart, in this biblical usage, is the religious root of man's existence, it is the fullness of one's personality. Thinking is merely one of the many expressions of human nature; it is one of the issues of life, of which Scripture says that they are all out of the heart; hence the heart must be kept above all that is to be guarded. Dr. Kuyper calls the heart the mystic root of our existence, that point of consciousness in which life is still undivided.[4]

Scripture's testimony on this point is abundant. When the Lord through the prophet Joel calls on his people to repent, he says, "rend your heart, and not your garments, and turn unto Jehovah your God" (2:13) ; when David prays for the renovation of his whole being to remove the grievous wound of sin, he cries out in anguish of soul, "Create in me a clean heart, O God; And renew a right spirit within me (Ps. 51:10) . In the New Testament, when our Lord wanted to indicate the fullness of man's corruption, he says to his disciples that the evils of fornication, murder, thefts, etc., come out of the heart (Mark 7:20-23) . Paul assures us that a man believes with his heart unto righteousness (Rom. 10:10) . The writer of the letter to the Hebrews warns against the evil of apostasy, which again is a heart problem, "Take heed brethren lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in falling away from the living God" (Heb. 3:12) . It may be granted without argument that the Bible uses the heart in many ways, but the point of this discussion is that when Scripture speaks concerning the basic religious relationship of man to God, both in sin and salvation, it emphasizes that the undivided unity, the center of man's existence, can only be found in his heart.

Since religion is rooted in the heart, it is therefore totalitarian in nature. It does not so much consummate culture as give culture its foundation, and serves as the presupposition of every culture. Even when faith and its religious root are openly denied, it is nevertheless tacitly operative as in atheistic Communism. A truly secular culture has never been found, and it is doubtful whether American Materialism can be called secular. Even Communism, like Nazism, has its gods and devils, its sin and salvation, its priests and its liturgies, its paradise of the stateless society of the future. For religious faith always transcends culture and is the integrating principle and power of man's cultural striving. Kroner stresses the subjective side of religion when he says, "Since faith is the ultimate and all-embracing power in the human soul, nothing whatever can remain untouched by it. The whole personality is, as it were, informed by one's faith."[5] Therefore, religion has the power of integrating man's culture through his faith, because it rises above all culture, it being no part

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4. K. J. Popma, "Het Uitgangspunt van de Wijsbegeerte der Wetsidee" in *De Reformatie in Het Calvinistisch Denken* (S'Gravenhage, 1939), p. 21; J. M. Spier, *An Introduction to Christian Philosophy* (Philadelphia, 1954), pp. 54, 55; F. H. Van Meyenfeldt, *Het Hart* (*Leb, Lebab*) *In Het Oude Testament* (With Summary in English-Leiden, 1950). Entire dissertation deals with the meaning of the term "Heart" in Scripture.

5. Richard Kroner, *Culture and Faith* (Chicago, 1951), pp. 209, 210.

of culture as such, but the mystical experience of apprehending God in the relation of the covenant.[6]

Religion is then to be distinguished from but not separated from culture. Just so it is with cultus, in which man's religious aspirations come to expression in acts of worship, prayer, and praise. Culture and cultus are the two streams that proceed out of man's religious experience; they together constitute his activity under the sun. The common designation of our acts of devotion is called worship, but the anthropologists usually employ the more technical term, "cultus." For purposes of parallelism and symmetry the term is here employed as the counterpart of culture. Our Reformed Fathers, who employed the Latin, made their motto, *ora et labora* (pray and work), while we usually speak of worship and work, to divide the activities of life. Sunday is set aside for worship, both individually and collectively; but "six days shalt thou labor and do all thy work!" The Liberals of the past mouthed a good deal of superficial nonsense when they, on the basis of Carlyle's "work is worship," concluded that worship is superfluous in true religion, that it was simply an imposition of priestly legalism. No one would deny, of course, that the way one works reveals his religion, perhaps more truly than the way he talks about it. But Scripture leaves no room for the idea that worship is not well-pleasing unto the Lord. Citing the Bible on that point is superfluous. Let the reader but remember the Psalms of David, the devotions of Jesus and his apostles and, lastly, the worship of the redeemed in heaven. To say that God, the Lord, does not demand worship of his creature, but only service is altogether contrary to the Scriptures and the spirit of religion. Religion, then, has these two aspects, indeed not mutually exclusive inasmuch as one may well pray and sing while working with his hands. Nevertheless, there are two distinguishable activities rooting in religion: cultus and culture, worship and work, *ora et labora,* aspiration and perspiration. And not only must our aspiration be under the inspiration of the Spirit, but also our perspiration; every ounce of expended energy, whether physical or mental, must be in the service of God, hence inspired. This is the essence of true religion; faith must inform one's whole being. To restrict religion either to acts of worship, or to deeds of service, is to break asunder what God hath joined together; for God, the Lord, demands both worship and work; religion consists of cultus and culture.

The religious relationship, which is trans-cosmic and so transcends time, while including all of a man's historical existence, is beyond logical analysis. It is the one fundamental presupposition of all man's reasoning, but is itself beyond logical apprehension since our existence in the covenant with God is as such unfathomable and is a matter of being, not of function. Therefore, the religious foundation of life makes philosophy possible and is not itself a philosophical question, for it lies beyond the border of philosophical investigation. It is only in his religion, through faith, that man knows himself and his calling in relation to God. Self-consciousness presupposes God-consciousness.

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[6] Cf. chapter eleven for a fuller discussion of the role of faith in culture.

Apostate religion is the result of fear (anxiety) which characterizes the life of apostate man. This is clearly seen in the case of Cain after he had murdered his brother Abel. Apostatizing mankind, with its pseudo-religion, tries to ward off evil and safeguard life by many sacral ceremonies. Thus the whole of the realm of the sacred becomes functional and is brought under the category of the cultic, under sacerdotal jurisdiction. Thus the distinction between religion and culture is obliterated, since every activity of life assumes cultic proportions and significance.[7] Hence the ubiquity of the witch doctor, and the superstitious ceremonies of a contemporary Catholic performing a certain ritual to bless the new twelve million dollar Hotel Riviera (Havana, Cuba) on its opening night, with a hundred visitors, who have been identified by police as known gangsters and gamblers, from large American cities, on hand.[8]

Since the church, or some form of organized religion, usually has charge of all cultic practices, the dire result in history has been that all of life falls under the hierarchical aegis. When, in the providence of God, the Gospel is preached in a primitive culture in which this cultic totalitarianism obtains, it is most difficult to deliver such a culture from sacerdotal influences and to teach the distinction between the spiritual relationship which is true religion and the cultic observance, which is an external manifestation of religion. The medieval church exercised such control over the whole life of its members through the priesthood, and it took the Protestant Reformation to break the stranglehold of the hierarchy in the Western world.

On the other hand, the danger of secularism, the denial that religion is significant for the whole of life, separating certain areas to which religion has no access, is equally false and pernicious. It constitutes a threat to modern culture and is essentially a false religion. This is the fault of those who tear the sacred robe of life into sacred and profane, and proceed to shut God and his claims out from the latter. This is the sin of Esau, of whom we read that he was a profane person (Heb. 12:16), since he sold his birthright for a mess of pottage; he did not consider God in all his ways. Calvinism has ever maintained that God has a claim to man's whole being. Religion, for the Calvinist, is a radical venture since it controls the root of man's existence and from thence permeates his whole functional world. Religion, as such is pre-functional, and man's cultus is but one function of that religion, under the administration of the church.

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[7] K. J. Popma, *Inleiding in de Wijsbegeerte* (Kampen, 1956), p. 96.

[8] Quoted from *Washington Star* (Dec. 11, 1957) in *Christian Heritage* (April, 1958).

The radical, totalitarian character of religion is such, then, that it determines both man's cultus and his culture. That is to say, the conscious or unconscious relationship to God in a man's heart determines all of his activities, whether theoretical or practical. This is true of philosophy, which is based upon a non-theoretical, religious presupposition. Thus man's morality and economics, his jurisprudence and his aesthetics, are all religiously oriented and determined. This is why apostasy produces, not only a false religion, but also a false culture, namely a culture which does not seek God and serve him as the highest good. This apostate culture came to florescence in the days of Lamech's sons, who invented musical instruments, movable dwellings, and instruments of war. Witness the sword song of apostate culture, man glorifying himself and seeking his own gratification and revenge (Gen. 4:16-24). This spirit also motivated the builders of the tower of Babel, when men refused to fulfill the cultural mandate to propagate the race and to subdue the earth. This apostate culture reached its apotheosis in ancient times in Nebuchadnezzar, who proudly boasted of the magnificent Babylon that he had built and defied the God of heaven. For this he was cast from his high estate to learn humility, feeding on grass with the animals for seven long years until he learned to bless the Most High, and to praise and honor him that liveth forever, to acknowledge that "all his works are truth and his ways justice; and those that walk in pride he is able to abase" (Dan. 4:37).

There can be no doubt that the historical antagonism of Christianity to pagan culture was due, to a large extent, to its apostate character. Not only did Christians shun idolatry with its cultic practices, but Christians also shunned the theatre, military service (due to the impact of apostate religion in requiring emperor worship) and many social customs that were sinful. Not only did believers oppose the worship of Venus and Bacchus as idolatry, but also the accompanying sexual promiscuity, fornication, revelry and drunkenness. They turned away from all the popular sports of the arena, the evidence of a decadent Roman culture. Small wonder that the erotic culture of paganism, in which harlotry and homosexuality were glamourized by poets and philosophers (*cf.* Ovid, Plato), was identified with paganism itself. Pagan preoccupation with cultic ritual had also contaminated certain cultural forms and customs, so that Christians abstained altogether, as in meat sacrificed to idols. Even A. Kuyper, that genial advocate of culture, admits, "As long, therefore, as the struggle with Paganism remained a struggle for life or death, the relation of Christianity to art could not but be an hostile one."[9]

However, there is a tension with non-Christian culture, not merely on the basis of its decadence and moral degradation, but also in its more exalted expressions, as in certain forms of art, where the subject is captivated and gradually estranged from the rule of Christ to some form of aestheticism. Although the Bible calls man a rebel in his state of apostasy, this rebellion may be camouflaged in elevated forms, profound thought, artistic rapture or some idealistic projection of the mind. T. S. Eliot holds that the difference between a neutral and a pagan society is of minor importance since they both negate Christianity.[10] However, the neutral, scientific negativity of an effete Liberalism proposing nostrums for the healing of the nations is no match for the strident paganism of our day. The problem of living a Christian life in a non-Christian society is pressing, since most of our social institutions are non-Christian and advertizing is in pagan hands. The family remains the only trustworthy transmitter of Christian culture (*Ibid.,* pp. 20, 22). Eliot hits the nail on the head when he says, "However bigoted the announcement may sound, the Christian can be satisfied with nothing less than a Christian organization of society . . . which is not the same thing as a society consisting exclusively of devout Christians" (*Ibid.,* p. 33). But Christians would have to insist upon a unified religious social code of behaviour and education would be Christian in the sense "that its aims will be directed by a Christian philosophy of life" (*Ibid.,* p. 37).

This, then, is the problem for God's people in our day. Every pagan religion has its own cultural expression; medieval Christianity developed its own culture, albeit controlled by the church under sacerdotal tutelage. Ever since the advent of the Copernican, Darwinian, and Kantian revolutions, Humanism has introduced a new paganism, so that Christianity no longer controls the media of culture, and it is no longer the motivating power in the cultural urge of the West. Today the West faces a cultural crisis of the first magnitude. Our culture has been uprooted, because for most men God is dead. And the gods which men have made for themselves (like the idols of Micah in Judges 17-18) have failed, and what else is there left? This is the tragic cry not only of the Existentialist philosophers, poets, and playwrights, but of the mass-man of our day.

It is certainly folly for God's people to think that they can live in two separate worlds, one for their religious life and devotional exercises, and the other usurping all other time, energy, money — an area in which the priests of Secularism are calling the numbers. One cannot keep on evangelizing the world without interfering with the world's culture. It devolves upon God's people, therefore, to contend for such a "condition of society which will give the maximum of opportunity for us to lead *wholly Christian lives* [italics added] and the maximum of opportunity for others to become Christians" (*Ibid.,* p. 97). To divide life into areas of sacred and secular, letting our devotions take care of the former while becoming secular reformers during the week, is to fail to understand the true end of man.

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[9] *Calvinism* (Grand Rapids, 1943), p. 157.

[10] *The Idea of a Christian Society* (New York, 1940), pp. 4, 5.

Those who see the great danger of a diluted religion in the externalism of a Christian society have a real point. Such a society constitutes a hindrance to conversion, as many a preacher can testify, "tending so to inoculate men with a mild form of Christian religiosity as to render them immune from the grand infection."[11] Whether a diffused Christianity is a liability or an asset is, indeed a moot question.

Consequently, there are those who would revert to some form of Anabaptistic separatism, with the words of Paul as motto, "Come ye out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord" (II Cor. 6:17), while others hold that the concept of a Christian culture has always been a snare and a delusion, an unrealizable dream under terrestrial conditions. The Barthians have specially repudiated the idea of a Christian culture in our day. For them there is no single form of social, political, economic order that is more in the spirit of the Gospel than another (*Op. cit.,* p. 86). Barth himself has scoffed at the idea of a Christian political party or Christian labor unions.[12] However, the poverty of this one-sided eschatology of Barth, apart from any theological strictures one might have, is that he does not allow for the power of God's grace to change men and society here and now. For Barth it is not man as sinner who lies under the judgment of God, but man as "creature" with all his culture who is under judgment. This false antithesis between God and man, between eternity and time is not scriptural but belongs in the Kierkegaardian, existentialistic frame of reference.

To conclude, religion and culture are inseparable. Every culture is animated by religion. A religion that is restricted to the prayer-cell is, in light of the above definition, a monstrosity and historically has proved unfruitful. True religion covers the whole range of man's existence. The basic covenantal relationship in which man stands to God comes to expression both in his cultus and his culture. Hence culture is never something adventitious, the color added as in the case of oranges and oleomargarine, to satisfy the eye. Kroner's suggestion that the story of the fall belongs in a category with that of Prometheus, who stole the divine fire and thus began man's cultural achievements, for which he was punished, is wrong. This would make man's cultural striving a doubtful addition to the divine intention (*Op. cit.,* p. 67). This is surely an eggregious misinterpretation of the biblical narrative, which presents man as both creature of and co-worker with God to fulfill his creative will from the beginning. The first sin of man consisted of an act of disloyalty in accepting Satan's interpretation concerning the cosmos and man's place in it, instead of living by the word of God's revelation. Kroner is right in holding that man never regains paradise by his own efforts, but he is most certainly wrong in holding that culture as such is to be blamed for man's tragic fiasco. In the final analysis Kroner cannot reach an integration of culture and faith because he sees the antithesis between God and Satan as a tension immanent in "creation" from the outset (*Ibid.,* p. 255). This is not only theologically reprehensible, since reconciliation is changed from an ethical transaction centering in the vicarious atonement of Christ on Calvary to an ontological (that which pertains to being) one, thereby shifting the central message of the Gospel to the "incarnation."[13] But on this basis, no Christian culture is possible, since then all of man's works are under the judgment of God on the basis of their creatureliness. However in Christ man is restored to God as cultural creature to serve his Maker in the world and as ruler over the world for God's sake.

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[11] John Baillie, *What is a Christian Civilization* (London, 1948), p. 37.

[12] The author sat in on a round-table student conference in Amsterdam in 1939, together with others from the Free University and the City University, in which Barth expressed his views relative to Christian cultural efforts. Vide Brunner, *The Divine Imperative* (Philadelphia, 1947), p. 432ff. Also K. Barth, *Der Christ in der Gesellschaft* (Münschen, 1920), S. 36, and Barth's *Römerbrief,* 2 Aufl. S. XIII, "Christentum das nicht ganz under gar und restlos Eschatologie ist, hat mit Christus ganz und gar und restlos nicht zu tun." This is the most radical form of Anabaptistic doctrine that the contemporary church has seen!

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[13] I have put the words "creation" and "incarnation" in quotes in this last section to indicate that neither Barth nor Kroner uses them in the accepted, historic Christian sense.

CHAPTER IV

CALVINISM DEFINED

This book is not written to speak in general terms about religion and culture, but seeks to define a specific concept of culture by using the adjective "Calvinistic." Among the many varieties of Protestantism, Calvinism stands out as having a definite, well-defined meaning in history. Kuyper and Warfield, two of the modern interpreters of Calvin, present Calvinism as the purest form of biblical Christianity. To them it is simply the truest, most comprehensive interpretation of the inscriptured Word of God, the Bible. To this, the ordinary, Bible-believing and historically oriented subscriber to the Reformed Faith gives cordial assent.

However, further elucidation is necessary, since the term "Calvinism" carries no unitary meaning in the minds of all who use it and there is no accepted univocal connotation available. Most scholars would agree that for a proper understanding in a given situation clear definition is imperative.

Genetically, and in its narrowest sense, Calvinism is applied simply to the teachings of the Genius of Geneva. However, the term has been used historically to designate those denominations of Protestantism that subscribed to the Reformed Creeds in distinction from the Lutheran, Anabaptistic, or Socinian constructions. Sometimes, indeed, all those who subscribed to the biblical doctrine of predestination have been called "Calvinists." A. Kuyper reminds us that the term was used by the Catholic majority in countries like France and Hungary to cast aspersions upon the Protestant minority.[1]

However, none of these designations will fully serve our purpose in this study. Kuyper speaks of still another sense in which one may employ the term "Calvinism" as a scientific name, which has historical, philosophical, and political overtones (*Ibid.,* p. 14). Warfield in his inimitable style speaks of Calvinism as "the entire body of conceptions, theological, ethical, philosophical, social, political, which, under the influence of the master mind of John Calvin, raised itself to dominance in the Protestant lands of the post-Reformation age, and has left a permanent mark not only upon the thought of mankind, but upon the life history of men, the social order of civilized peoples, and even the political organizations of states."[2]

Actually the core of Calvinism as a theological system, as an understanding of the special revelation of God in Christ, goes back to

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[1] *Calvinism,* (Grand Rapids, 1943), pp. 12, 13.

[2] B. B. Warfield, *Calvin and Calvinism* (New York, 1931), p. 353.

Augustine. The ideas, of course, are those of Paul and Christ, of Isaiah and Moses, which is another way of saying that Calvinism is oriented to Scripture. However, Calvin is recognized by his followers as the greatest exponent and systematizer of this complex of thought.

But behind the theological system there is the deep religious consciousness, which stands in awe before the majesty of God. Throughout, Calvinism is characterized by the poignant realization of Hagar, when she said, "Thou, God, seest me," and the holy fear of an Isaiah who cried out, "Woe is me! for I am undone; for I am a man of unclean lips . . . for mine eyes have seen the King, Jehovah of hosts" (Isa. 6:5). A Calvinist is a man who has seen God in his holiness and is ready with Job of old to cry,

"I had heard of thee by the hearing of the ear;
But now mine eye seeth thee:
Wherefore I abhor myself,
And repent in dust and ashes" (Job 42:5-6).

Calvinism as a biblical system of thought does not differ in kind from other forms of evangelical, theistic interpretation of God's special revelation, but the difference is one of degree and emphasis. Calvinism professes to be more thoroughly and consistently oriented to the special revelation of God. It also takes more seriously the doctrine of the noetic effects of sin; it is very dubious about man's reason as a valid and effective instrument for attaining truth apart from the enlightenment of the Spirit and the revelation in Jesus Christ.

Calvinism not only wishes with Augustine to think God's thoughts after him, but it also seeks to make every thought captive to the obedience of Christ (II Cor. 10:5). This gives specificity to one's conception of Christianity and its relation to culture. At the same time, it separates us from those who would retain the name "Calvinism" and some of its major ideas but would slough off the doctrine of an inerrant Scripture, double predestination, and any specific treatment of the divine decrees as proposed by John T. McNeill.[3]

It is beyond the scope of this work to reproduce the theological ideas, or the system of doctrine, which is known as Calvinism. This system is the same as that which we call the Reformed Faith and may be studied in Calvin's *Institutes of the Christian Religion,* or in any of his best modern expositors. Among them may be mentioned A. Kuyper, H. Bavinck and K. Schilder in the Netherlands, and, in America, the Hodges of the old Princeton, B. B. Warfield, G. Vos, J. Gresham Machen, John Murray, *et al.* For a single volume, the *Reformed Dogmatics* of L. Berkhof will give excellent service, but

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3. *The History and Character of Calvinism* (New York, 1954), p. 433; cf. M. Eugene Osterhaven, who puts McNeill in the category of the broad Calvinists, who seek a renewal of the Calvinistic spirit, which for him is a combination of God-consciousness and an urgent sense of mission. In *American Calvinism,* ed. by J. Hoogstra (Grand Rapids, 1957), p. 125.

the recent translation of Herman Bavinck's *Magnalia Dei* under the title, *Our Reasonable Faith,* is perhaps the most brilliant compendious expression for the ordinary reader. What follows here is an attempt to highlight some of the views of Calvin and Calvinists that have given this particular Protestant interpretation its distinctiveness.

The first principle of Calvinism is the acknowledgment of Scripture as the Word of God. This was the formal principle of the Protestant Reformation set forth in all the Calvinistic creeds and the end of all contradiction in all of Calvin's own writings. Scripture was not only the authoritative guide for the way of salvation, but it furnished man with an authoritative interpretation of reality as a whole, and, more particularly, of man's existence *under the sun.* For the Calvinist seeks to see all things in the light of eternity (*sub species aeternitatis*) since he confesses with the Psalmist, "In thy light shall we see light" (Ps. 36:9). Some of the implications of this Calvinistic principle of the relevance of Scripture for culture will be further developed in chapter ten.

There are those today who deny that the Scripture presents a system of doctrine or truth but maintain that it consists merely of God's speech in existential situations. According to this view, we may never put the truth in a straitjacket; we may never conform revelation to our logic and our thirst for systematization and order. However, Calvin was not afflicted with this modern phobia. Calvin's logical mind saw a beautiful order and unity in the self-disclosure of God, although he abhorred all speculation. It was his noble ambition and earnest desire to see the truth of God whole, not in fragmentized and isolated bits. He saw in it one grand unfolding of God's preceptive will for man's instruction on his earthly pilgrimage. At the same time, the decretive will of God was for Calvin the source of all existence; it is not narrowly concerned with the church and the salvation of the soul, but with all of life, the social, political, scientific, juridical, aesthetic, and the moral spheres as well as the spiritual. For this reason, Calvinism has been designated as a world-view (*Weltanschauung*), since it speaks significantly of man's relationship to God, to man, and to the cosmos. A. Kuyper in his *Stone Lectures* places Calvinism alongside of Paganism, Islamism, Romanism, and Modernism as one of the five main systems of thought in the history of civilization (*Ibid.,* p. 32). And H. C. Minton reminds us that the name of Calvin "is not linked, like that of Luther, with any great branch of the Christian Church; it is more appropriately associated with a great system of thought, and that system is so comprehensive, so pervasive, and so polygonal that, from one point of view, it is a solid body of doctrine embracing all the great truths of religion and life."[4]

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[4] *Calvin Memorial Addresses* (Savannah, 1909), p. 37.

Calvinism, then, is not merely a collection of disconnected ideas, like Absalom's tomb to which every Israelite carried his stone, but it purports to be a unity, a vital organism of thought rising out of an overpowering conception of God and his claims on man. Thus a formative principle emerges, a germinal concept to which all else is related and by which all is dominated.

However, the exact formulation of that formative principle has not been an easy matter. Dr. Warfield assures us that it has taxed the acumen of a long series of thinkers for the last one hundred years (*Op. cit.,* pp. 353, 369). In his monograph, *The Fundamental Principle of Calvinism,* published in 1930, Dr. H. H. Meeter reviews the history of this quest, but a detailed report of the matter would not serve the purpose of this study. Suffice it to say that F. W. Kampschulte, a Roman Catholic, who wrote a two volume life of Calvin, held the doctrine of predestination to be the central thought of Calvinism, while A. Schweitzer saw the glory of God as the main element in Calvinistic thought.

It ought to be granted that there can be no reasonable doubt that the doctrine of predestination was one of the moving causes of the Protestant Reformation. This was not merely a doctrine affirmed by theologians, although it did receive special attention at the Reformed ecumenical Synod of Dort and was fervently confessed by the Calvinistic divines that drew up the Westminster Confession of faith. But even the common people understood and were moved by the consideration that their salvation had been determined by God from before the foundation of the world. And yet, this doctrine cannot be called the formative principle of Calvinism. It is not the root idea of, but rather one of the logical consequences of its high theism. Neither is the doctrine of predestination peculiar to Calvinism, but it was part of that great revival of Augustinianism which characterized the entire Reformation in all its branches. Among the Reformers there was no dispute on this point, they all subscribed to this scriptural doctrine cordially (*ex animo*). Warfield testifies that "Luther and Melanchthon and the compromising Butzer were no less zealous for absolute predestination than Zwingli and Calvin. Even Zwingli could not surpass Luther in sharp and unqualified assertion of it; and it was not Calvin but Melanchthon who gave it formal place in his primary scientific statement of the elements of the Protestant faith" (*Op. cit.,* pp. 357, 358). On the other hand, it ought to be affirmed in this connection, that the doctrine of justification by faith is not the exclusive possession of Lutherans. From the very beginning it formed a substantial element in the Reformed faith, and, as a matter of fact, has been retained in Calvinism in its original purity, so that faith does not become for it the ground of justification.[5]

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[5] B. B. Warfield, *op. cit.,* p. 358.

Furthermore it is noteworthy that Calvin did not include a treatment of predestination in his first edition of the *Institutes,* 1536. It was not until later, when such heretics as Costellio, Bolsec, and others denied this important doctrine of Scripture that Calvin began to give it a prominent place. But even so it is not found under the rubric of the decrees, but rather in the third book which deals with the application of redemption to the heart of man. It is only after Calvin has treated justification and its appendix, Christian liberty; after he has at great length discoursed on "Prayer, the Principle Exercise of Faith, and the Medium of Our Daily Reception of Divine Blessings," that he at last considers the vexing question why the covenant of life is not equally preached to all and why it does not find the same reception among those to whom it is preached. The answer for Calvin is found in a consideration of the doctrine of eternal election, or God's predestination of some to salvation and of others to destruction. Hence, it ought to be clear that no matter how important this doctrine may be and how large it looms in the Calvinistic confessions, it could not be elevated to the formative principle, or the point of departure in Calvinistic thought. It would conflict with the spirit of Calvinism, which does not put man or his salvation at the center but seeks in all things to view the matter in the light of God's being and glory.

Now the consensus of modern Calvinistic scholars like Doumergue, Kuyper, Bavinck, Warfield, Fabius, and others, is that the primary principle of the Calvinistic system of thought is the direct and absolute sovereignty of God over all things. However, such sovereignty is not one among the many attributes of God, but it comes to expression in all of his attributes. He is sovereign in his power but also in his love; in his justice but also in his grace. Sovereignty then is not a property of the divine nature, but a prerogative of the divine being arising out of his perfections.[6]

By sovereignty the Calvinist understands the absolute right of God in ruling the world to do as he pleases since he is the creator, "For of him and through him and unto him are all things."[7] However, there is no unrighteousness or arbitrariness in God's sovereignty, for it is defined and predicated upon his wisdom, righteousness, and holiness.[8] The sovereign will of God is the final cause of all created reality, and beyond or behind that will man cannot inquire. Such an inquiry would be impious, for "Who art thou, that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, Why didst thou make me thus?" (Rom. 9:20) . That God's sovereign will is ultimate the Calvinist believes on the basis of Scripture, which gives its consentient testimony to this effect: "Worthy art thou, our Lord and our God, to receive the glory and the honor and the power: for thou didst create all things, and because of thy will they were, and were created" (Rev. 4:11).

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[6] Cf. H. H. Meeter, *op. cit.,* pp. 71ff.

[7] John Calvin, *Institutes* (Bk. I, Ch. 16, par. 1-9; Bk. III, Ch. 21; 22, 23).

[8] A. Lecerf, "The Sovereignty of God as understood by Calvin," in *The Second Conference of Calvinists* ('S Gravenhage, 1935), p. 31.

God is sovereign in his being, in the sense that he alone has being in himself, which implies a repudiation of all evolutionistic and monistic pantheism. God is sovereign in his knowledge, so that we say with Augustine that things are as they are because God knew them and determined them in his counsel. God also sovereignly determines what is good, and the good depends upon the sovereign will of God. God is not under law, but the giver of law and the maintainer of truth and justice.[9] To put it in still another way, we may say that God's sovereignty is rooted in his self-sufficiency, for "he is before all things...," "in him were all things created...," "and in him all things consist" (Col. 1:16, 17).[10]

Religion based on divine sovereignty is religion for God's sake.[11] Such a religion is direct, putting man into immediate fellowship with God. It is all-embracing, extending to every phase of human life, not merely to external worship and personal piety.

There have been those who have held that the principle of the sovereignty of God is the logical ground from which everything else is deduced.[12] But this would reduce Calvinism to a speculative system of thought, which it is not. For the one thing that marked Calvin and those who sought to follow him is their faithfulness to the Word of God. Calvin was the sworn enemy of all philosophical construction with respect to the nature of God and his relationships with men. It did not occur to Calvin to sacrifice one element of the truth for any other.

This may be the reason why some modern scholars, as witness P. Barth, deny that any doctrine is basic in Calvin's theology, since Calvin does not hesitate to leave unresolved paradoxes, as for example, the doctrine of divine predestination and human responsibility, that of the good creation and origin of evil. John T. McNeill, who has written a most excellent work on the history of Calvinism, but who tends to interpret the character of Calvinism in line with his modernistic assumptions, speaks of the "dialectical character" of Calvin's thought. He is, of course, repeating the interpretation of P. Barth, Niesel, etc., a whole school of modern Calvin interpreters (*Op. cit.*, p. 202). However, we must beware of the term "dialectical." For

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[9] Le Cerf, *ibid.*, p. 32.

[10] C. Breed, "Divine Sovereignty and Religious Life" in *Second International Conference of Calvinists*, p. 143.

[11] Cf. A. Kuyper, "Calvinism and Religion" in *Calvinism*, pp. 41-77.

[12] E. G. A. Schweitzer in Germany and Scholten in Holland. Meeter also quotes Bavinck to this effect that from the root principle of sovereignty "everything that is specifically Reformed may be derived and explained" *op. cit.*, p. 82.

Calvin there was no ultimate paradox; the truth was one in God, in whom all seemingly logical contradictions are resolved. Calvin acknowledged that the finite mind is not able to comprehend the ways of God, since they are past finding out, and his judgments unfathomable. This is a far cry from the Barthian paradox, which is constitutive of reality as such. Furthermore, the objection of McNeill that the principle of sovereignty creates insoluble antimonies with respect to sin and evil, predestination and reprobation, does not hold. On the contrary, for Calvin God's sovereignty was the only answer to these paradoxes. Moreover, that the sovereignty principle itself does not obviate all problems is no reason for rejecting it as constitutive in Calvin's theology. However, the one overwhelming and ever-recurring impression that the Word made upon Calvin's sensitive soul was that God was the alpha and the omega, of whom and through whom and unto whom all things existed. This principle of sovereignty, then, is not so much the logical foundation of a system of thought, but a religious conviction of prime spiritual magnitude. the fundamental factor in the religious consciousness of which Warfield spoke (*Op cit.*, p. 354).

God's sovereignty is the atmosphere in which the Calvinist lives, the milieu in which he acts as a cultural being. It means that religion is not of life a thing apart, but the end-all and be-all of man's life under the sun. Religion is for God, for whom all things exist. Whereas all forms of Arminianistic Christianity make man the final arbiter of his own salvation, in Calvinism God saves sovereignly, immediately whom he wills.[13] Salvation is of the Lord, therefore, glory to his name!

Due to the deep conviction of the sovereignty of God, the Word of God was taken very seriously by Calvinists. It became the unconditional norm for faith and life to the believer. The divine injunction not to add or to take away has been scrupulously observed by Calvinism. Thus a Calvinistic ethics was developed, with its high moral requirements corresponding to the high theism of Calvinism. Because God was held to be the absolute sovereign for man's life, it became a question of determining the will of God from his Word. John Knox testified that he had never seen another place where the will of God was obeyed as faithfully as in Geneva.[14]

James Froude, English historian and sometime Rector of St. Andrews, goes so far as to say that "Calvinism as it existed at Geneva, and as it endeavored to be wherever it took root for a century and a half after him, was not a system of opinion, but an attempt to make the will of God as revealed in the Bible an authoritative guide for social as well as personal direction" (*Op. cit.*, p. 43). And in speaking of the God-consciousness of Calvinists, which made them suffer reproach, and added to their number in Western Europe almost every man that hated a lie, he adds, "Whatever exists at this moment in England and Scotland of conscientious fear of doing evil is the remnant of the convictions which were branded by the Calvinists into the people's hearts" (*Ibid.*, p. 44). Of course, one need not subscribe to Froude's pantheistic idealism in quoting him, but the evidence of moral purity and spiritual energy to which he alludes is unmistakably a by-product of Calvinism's sense of divine sovereignty, by which it overthrew spiritual wickedness in high places and hurled kings from their thrones.

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[13] B. B. Warfield, *Plan of Salvation* (Grand Rapids, 1935), who inveighs against every form of auto-soterism, sacerdotalism and universalism, because they deprive God of his sovereignty and they are something less than a consistent supernaturalism.

[14] Quoted by J. A. Froude, *Calvinism* (New York, 1871), p. 43.

This naturally brings us to the question of God's sovereignty and the impact of Calvinism on politics. Here also it proved to be a potent principle. On the one hand, the consciousness that God is sovereign is the death of all absolutism, whether of kings or states; but, on the other hand, men are willing subjects to lawful authority because they are duty bound to obey for conscience sake, since all authority is given of God (*cf.* Rom. 13:1-6; I Pet. 2:13, 14; Titus 3:1; etc.).

There is no need to trace the full implications of the sovereignty of God principle at this time, since this will be done in more detail in part three. However, it ought to be mentioned at this point that some men, also of Reformed persuasion, of whom Dr. V. Hepp may be taken as representative, take exception to the idea that God's sovereignty in any way expresses the essence of or is the basic principle of Calvinism. To his mind this would degrade Calvinism to a type of relational theology, which he condemns both in Schleiermacher and those who in repudiation of Schleiermacher speak of the infinite distance between God and man. For Hepp the implication of a strictly God-centered theology is that we do not ask who God is in relation to the world, but "who He Himself is."[15] Hepp is of the opinion that the ontological existence (who God is in himself) should occupy the most important place in any theology. Since sovereignty presupposes the elevation above something or someone, this doctrine does not lie at the center of Calvinism, according to Hepp (*Op. cit.*, p. 20). However, to recognize on the basis of the texts cited by Dr. Hepp that God exists before the world and is transcendent in being does not require making this the prime principle of one's theology. All Calvinists would here oppose the Barthian emphasis that God is what he is in Jesus Christ in relation to the world. Such an activistic concept of revelation is unacceptable to the spiritual heir of Calvin.[16] However, it does not follow that we should give God's existence in himself a more important place as the determining principle in Calvinism than God's works in time and his relation to fallen man in and through Jesus Christ. Such pure ontological speculation was condemned by Calvin as unprofitable and our "knowledge of God should rather tend, first, to teach us fear and reverence; and, secondly, to instruct us to implore all good at his hand, and to render him the praise of all that we receive. For how can you entertain a thought of God without immediately reflecting, that, being a creature of his formation, you must, by right of creation, be subject to his authority? that you are indebted to him for your life, and that all your actions should be done with reference to him?" (*Institutes,* Bk. I, Ch. 2, par. 2). This paragraph not only thoroughly refutes the speculative, ontological approach of Hepp, c.s., but at the same time is the best possible illustration of the contention that the doctrine of God's sovereignty was a kind of aura, or atmosphere, which enveloped all of Calvin's thinking. It was never construed by him or his followers merely as an abstract principle of dogma, but it was the living faith of hearts aflame with the sense of God's inescapable presence and a profound consciousness of his holy claims upon them.

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[15] V. Hepp, "The Sovereignty of God," in *Second Int. Calv. Conf.*, p. 20.

The confession of the direct and absolute sovereignty of God gives to Calvinism both depth and breadth, depth in that all things are of, through, and unto God, breadth in that this omnipotent and transcendent God has universal claims, that he is the lawgiver for *all* of created reality, that his rule is totalitarian.

It ought to be observed that, although this term totalitarian has fallen into disrepute due to the usurpation of power by mere men, who claim for themselves the power to rule the totality of man's world, basically the term has its proper use. Bela Vasady has spoken of *Calvin's Belief-ful Totalitarianism* and directs our attention "through the mirror of Calvin's theology, to the fact that the totalitarian element is a marked trait of a genuine Christian faith. What we mean is that . . . in all that we do, we have to make fully evident in every direction the whole dependency of the whole man and the whole world upon the whole God, and that in this total dependency man's whole existence is resolved into being 'of God, through God and unto God.' "[17]

In this faith that the whole man with the whole cosmos must be brought under the rule of God, Calvinists have of late produced a philosophy which recognizes God's revelation as the ultimate and supreme authority instead of the autonomous mind of man.[18] Not only does a biblically oriented philosophy produce its own metaphysics, it must also produce its own methodology.[19] This is simply a recognition of the fact that man's thinking forms a unity, that it is all of a piece. Aristotle's logic belongs to his metaphysics; the two cannot be divorced. So too the Logical Positivists have a logic that involves a metaphysics of their own. Let no one here interpose the idea that the Calvinistic philosophers deny the structure of the mind and the laws of thought as being common for all. But the law of contradiction is something altogether different in its ultimate implications for a Christian than for a pagan philosopher. Laws, according to God's self-revelation, are created entities, serving the Creator and bringing order into created reality. They are never impersonal, for behind the law is the lawgiver.

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[16] C. Van Til, *The New Modernism* (Philadelphia, 1947), Preface, VIII, IX.

[17] Bela Vasady, *The Main Traits of Calvin's Theology* (Grand Rapids, 1951), pp. 23, 24.

This contemporary Calvinistic philosophy is the fruition of a cry of Calvin for a Christian Philosophy and the efforts of Kuyper and Bavinck in the 19th century to establish it.[20] These men pointed out the implications of the presupposition of faith and the resultant radical antithesis in the field of science, art, politics, and in fact, in every sphere of man's existence. In short, a biblical metaphysics implies a biblical theory of knowledge and a biblical ethics.[21] But one cannot stop there, as Kuyper pointed out in his Stone Lectures.[22] The claim that God puts upon his people makes them peculiar in the sight of the world, for God's sovereignty is the rule of his will in their hearts, so that they are motivated by an unseen power and radically re-oriented in their whole being. They have taken aboard their ship of life a new Pilot, Jesus Christ as Lord, who is steering their course by the lodestar of God's Word, to the praise of the glory of his grace. This makes all the difference in the world for the cultural situation. An attempt to spell out the further implications of the sovereignty principle will be made in the third part of this book.

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[18] Cf. H. Dooyeweerd, *A New Critique of Theoretical Thought* (Philadelphia, 1953), 4 vols; also, D. H. Th. Vollenhoven, *Het Calvinisme en de Reformatie van de Wijsbegeerte* (Amsterdam, 1933).

[19] Cf. D. H. TH. Vollenhoven, *De Noodzakelykheid Ener Christelijke Logica* (Amsterdam, 1932); also C. Van Til, "Arminianisme in de Logica," in *De Reformatie Van Het Calvinistisch Denken,* ('S Gravenhage, 1939), pp. 82-120.

[20] A. Kuyper, *Principle of Sacred Theology* (Grand Rapids, 1954); *Calvinism* (Grand Rapids, 1943), pp. 131ff.

[21] Cf. C. Van Til, *Defense of the Faith* (Philadelphia, 1955), pp. 1-81.

[22] *Calvinism.*

CHAPTER V

THE CALVINISTIC CONCEPTION OF SIN AND ITS EFFECTS ON CULTURE

For a proper evaluation of modern culture, the question of sin and its effect upon man and his world is of supreme importance. It would be totally unrealistic to say that all that is is right as do the Normalists of whom A. Kuyper makes mention. For since they are committed to an evolutionary naturalism, they refuse to reckon with other than natural data.[1] On the other hand, because of his fall into sin, man did not change into something less than man; no, he did not lose his humanity. Man did not become an animal or a devil when he transgressed the covenant of his God. Indeed, he did become ethically alienated and morally depraved, but he retained his religious nature and his *sensus deitatis* (God-consciousness). Essentially, in the structure of his creaturehood, man remained the same, but functionally he departed from his original rectitude. The direction of his life was changed; he became derailed as to his true goal in life; he no longer sought God as his chief joy. His relationship to God became strained, and, in fact, turned into one of enmity, and consequently man became a stranger to himself, to his fellowman and a vagabond on the earth, since he was exiled from his true home, the paradise of God.

With this much of a preliminary statement, let us now consider in more detail, both negatively and positively, what the results of sin have been.

It ought to be unequivocally clear that sin did not invalidate the cultural mandate nor excuse man from fulfilling his cultural task. The fact that man has broken (transgressed) the law of God does not imply that God's law has been abolished, that it has lost its force for man's life as a creature of God. That law is unalterable, since it is an expression of the being of God, who is unchangeable. Man has not shipwrecked the plans of God, for, says Isaiah, his counsel shall stand and he doeth whatsoever he pleaseth (46:10; cf. Prov. 19:21 and Ps. 33:11); all things come to pass after the counsel of his will (Eph. 1:11). Man, indeed, became a covenant-breaker, but God holds him responsible nevertheless, just as we hold man responsible for his obligations at law. The Pelagian idea that responsibility is merely coextensive with ability finds no support in Scripture. Instead, Adam is told to go forth henceforth to labor in the sweat of his brow and his wife is to bear children (multiply and be fruitful) in sorrow and pain. Although man refuses to function as God's office-bearer and vicegerent, God does not on that account abolish the covenant and the demands of his cultural mandate. Neither did sin destroy the image of God in man altogether, for man still functions in this world as a rational, moral, and cultural creature. Indeed, man's nature is now a deformation (malformation),[2] for he no longer has knowledge of the truth, he no longer loves that which is holy, and he has lost the true goal of his cultural striving.

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[1] A. Kuyper, *Calvinism* (Grand Rapids, 1943), p. 132.

But man has not lost his cultural urge, his instinct to rule, his love of power, his ability to form and to mould matter after his will. He continues to multiply, to replenish the earth with his kind; he loves to work and to exercise dominion over the works of God. He uses the light of reason to discover the laws of the universe in order to capture the power of the sun's rays and the light for his use, and he belabors the earth with the machinery that his technical ingenuity has wrought. He builds houses, composes music, raises crops, and develops various specimens of domesticated animals for his service; he nurtures his offspring, flies through space and measures the stars, and plumbs the depths of the seas, and astounds his fellowmen with the discoveries of modern science, with the promise that tomorrow shall be as today, only much more abundant. All these productions are cultural: they constitute man's secondary environment, they bring nature to fruition, they establish man's dominion over the universe. As such they are not to be deprecated and denied cultural standing. There is no antithesis between nature and grace, and there is no sound reason for denying these works of man cultural status. In this respect it would seem that the only proper and wise course is to follow biblical terminology and usage, which does not deny knowledge to the natural man, but distinguishes right knowledge and holiness of the truth through regeneration from carnal knowledge and the wisdom of the world.[3] Paul does not hesitate to speak of the wisdom of this world, even though he designates it as foolishness in the sight of God. So too, it is valid to denominate the efforts of mankind expended on nature, by which the latter gives her fruits for man's sustenance and enjoyment, as culture. It does not follow, that, because the true end of man, to know God and enjoy him forever, is not achieved by man's cultural effort, that therefore we cannot and may not speak of man's earthly endeavors as cultural. It is better to say that man is now producing a godless culture, that he has apostatized in his cultural striving. To say that culture is now impossible in a sin-sick world is to short-change God, who as Ruler of heaven and earth and the Determiner of man's destiny is causing his purposes to be fulfilled even through man's rebellion, so that the wrath of man is praising God (Ps. 76:10). It is true, of course, that man in his cultural striving will not reach unto the perfect man in a perfect world while existing in the state of sin. This would be utopianism, of which man as rebel has been guilty repeatedly. Of this, history gives us a long record, as witness Plato's *Republic,* More's *Utopia,* Bacon's *New Atlantis,* Rousseau's return to nature, Saint Simon's social Christianity, Marx's classless society, and, to mention no more, Huxley's *Brave New World* and Orwell's 1984.[4] Man cannot reconstruct the perfect world of Paradise, in which sin was not known. And the kingdom of God is not established by man's cultural striving, simply by subduing the earth and making humanity free from want, since culture is not the opposite of depravity (cf. ch. III).

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[2] L. Van Der Zanden, *De Mens Als Beeld Gods* (Kampen, n.d.), pp. 81-103.

[3] C. Van Til, *The Defense of the Faith* (Philadelphia, 1955), pp. 92, 93.

Not only did sin not abolish the duty nor destroy the urge to cultural activity, but the cultural milieu also remains. The good earth to which man is adapted by creative design, is still man's habitat and workshop. Not only the physical earth but also time as the enveloping atmosphere in which history is made, remains to man the creature. True, nature is now red in tooth and claw and has become an enemy to man, so that the hurricane destroys him and the serpent poisons him. God has cursed the ground for man's sake so that it brings forth thorns and thistles and it is necessary to labor in the sweat of his brow to eke out an existence until he returns to the dust from whence he was taken. However the earth still yields her fruits and produces what man needs to sustain him as creature of time and space. Satan's strategem did not destroy God's plan; it did not change the basic structure of reality. The earth remains as the raw material for man's cultural striving; man also continues as image-bearer of God and the structure of his being as a rational, moral, cultural creature was not destroyed by sin. And the law for man's being, namely, to be fruitful, to subdue the earth and cultivate the ground in order to have dominion over the earth, that law was not repealed or abrogated. But the whole creation was subjected to vanity and is now waiting to be delivered from the bondage of corruption (cf. Rom. 8:18ff.).

However, man as sinner was ethically alienated from his creator, who is his Lord. It is still true that in him we live and move and have our being (Acts 17:28) and though "I make by bed in Sheol" God will be there to sustain my being (metaphysical relationship) (Ps. 139:8); but, nevertheless, it is true that man's ethical relation to God was basically altered. Through disobedience man became the object of the wrath of God, so that he died the death of spiritual separation from the source of his being (Gen. 17; Rom. 5:12ff.; I Cor. 15:22). As a result, the light of man's life was extinguished and he now roams in darkness; his existence lost its unifying principle and became broken and disintegrated, and culture lost its true end, the love and service of the God of heaven. Thus religion and cutlure became divorced, or rather, culture became the end instead of the means, and man sought to find his chief delight in his own creations, the works of his hands. But man was a rebel and his proud heart obdurate. He became an enemy of God, and his holiness became impurity, thus infecting all his works with sin. In his separation from God, in whose light alone man can see the truth, man lost his catholicizing spirit — he no longer was able to see life meaningful and whole, but his culture was fragmentized. By his specialization man sees only part of reality, but he does not see its relation to the whole, nor does he ascend from the creature to the creator. In his apostasy, man has fallen in love with the cosmos or some aspect of reality, and he worships the creature instead of the creator. The sinner no longer sees God in his divine self-revelation, but he takes the appearance for the reality, making this present world the end-all and be-all. "What once was the mirror of divine beauty has been shattered by sin into many fragments, and man, seizing one of them, could now see only his own reflection in the glass."[5] Wencelius goes on to say that "The sinner is no longer able to distinguish between false beauty and true beauty. The devil warps our vision and incites sinners to warp it in such a way that we can no longer see beauty as a sensible reality" (*Ibid.*, p. 164). Culture, then, in the state of sin, may be compared to the branch of a flowering tree that has been severed from its trunk. There is still much beauty and loveliness in this world but it has no abiding vitality, it is cut off from the source of its life; it shall wither and decay as did all the cultures of ancient civilization. The Spirit of the Lord bloweth upon it, all flesh is grass and the goodliness thereof as the flower of the field (Is. 40:6-8).

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[4] H. Van Riessen, *The Society of the Future,* Tr. D. H. Freeman, (Philadelphia, 1957), pp. 38-64.

As a result of this perversion of the true end of man we find in the field of art such godless cliches as "art for art's sake." The love for the beautiful becomes the end-all and be-all of the artists' striving, if indeed it does not degenerate into that glorification of the body in which a perverted sex ideal, which caters to the gratification of the flesh for the sake of gain, becomes the dominating feature.[6] The sad fact is that men no longer see the proper function of art as

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[5] Leon G. Wencelius, "The Word of God and Culture," in *The Word of God and the Reformed Faith* (Grand Rapids, 1943), pp. 163, 164).

[6] A. Kuyper, *Pro Rege* (Kampen, 1912), Vol. III, pp. 526ff., where Kuyper professes his great appreciation for art, but warns against three great evils: art idolatry, sinful pride in the artist and worship of his talents; and, the abuse of art for economic gain by pandering to the baser instincts of the masses.

"an imaginary elevation of life in the direction of the perfect,"[7] but art is taken as that one thing in life which gives men true joy and a detachment from misery. However, this is an illusion. It cannot change the reality of sin and misery, labor and sorrow; it is but imaginary. And the danger consists in confounding imaginary perfection with real perfection, of confounding the unreal creations of art with the real world in which we live. Only God creates reality, he alone has the power to make something new out of nothing; but we are imitators of God, we can create a kind of cosmos in architecture; we can embellish nature's forms in our sculpture and create the illusion of real life by lines and tints in our paintings, and probe the mystery of sound and feeling in music and poetry. But when we substitute this imaginary world for the real perfection that God alone reveals and requires of us in our relationship to him, then we fall into aestheticism. This is the substitution of art for religion (*Op. cit.*, pp. 75, 76).

In the field of science the havoc of sin is also apparent, for man develops his power over nature and brings the world under cultivation, not for God's sake and his service, but for his own gratification, to satisfy his lust. In all his striving man either seeks himself, as did the pre-diluvian titans, the builders of the Tower of Babel, and Nebuchadnezzar, or on the other hand, the cultural product itself may become the main end, as in the case with much of modern invention and production. In the latter case, culture itself becomes the end of man's striving. Professor Schilder says that man has fallen in love with the tools and has lost the ideal of doing the job at hand — namely, finishing the task of being God's co-laborers for the glory of God.[8]

Furthermore, true culture is constructive, but sin is destructive. Sin creates chaos while true culture seeks harmony. Think, for example, of the havoc that was wrought in the ancient world by proud, culture-conscious Nebuchadnezzar, and by his modern replica, Hitler, who destroyed human life and values on a grand scale in order to achieve a false ideal of Aryan supremacy. Millions were liquidated, other millions served as slaves, and the favored few who exercised power used that privilege for self-glorification and self-gratification. But the judgment of God has been revealed from heaven against all such apostate culture, so that Babylon became a habitation for jackals and modern man lives in fear and trembling lest his present power to unleash the pent-up energy of the atom turn upon himself as a Frankenstein. May this not be a fulfillment of the words of our Lord, namely, that in the last days men's hearts shall fail them for fear. Meanwhile all the brave talk of our secular leaders (e.g. Roosevelt and Churchill) about making the world safe from fear is but whistling in the dark, or worse, defiant rebellion against the Son (cf. Ps. 2).

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[7] E. Brunner, *Christianity and Civilization*, Vol. II (New York, 1949), p. 75.

[8] K. Schilder, *Christus en Kultuur* (Franeker, 1953), p. 83.

Man in the state of sin is not only godless, in the above sense of the term that he ignores God and glorifies self; but he is also hateful and unholy, ethically corrupt. He has not only lost the true knowledge of God, but he no longer knows the truth about created reality except in a very attenuated, proximate sense, as Calvin observes. He is not only a false prophet mouthing the lies of the devil, but he is also a counterfeit priest, who worships the creature and loves the lie. Wencelius (*Op. cit.,* p. 165) reminds us that man also lost true righteousness, his sense of harmony, proportion, and beauty. Man has been blinded to the sight of beauty, and his sense of calling as king over God's universe has been dulled. Sin has separated man from his God, who is the source of created beauty and who determines truth by his law and his interpretation, and, therefore, man in sin cannot attain to the harmony of the perfect paradise in his art creations; he can only reflect that which is mediated by his sin-corrupted consciousness.

But, more than that, man is not only out of touch with God and his world, he is also a stranger to humanity; that is to say, there is a chasm of misunderstanding and hatred that separated man from his neighbor. This has a deleterious effect culturally. Babel is the prime example of man's cultural failure due to misunderstanding, but the constructive labor to which man was called by his creator in the cultural mandate has been hampered by wars and rumors of wars throughout the whole of human history. More than half of the budget of modern nations is being spent for wars, past, present, and future, thus immobilizing half of the nations' man-power from constructive achievements. Add to this the cost of crime in countries like the United States, the cost of the liquor industry and the social degradation and cultural depravity of alcoholism, narcotic addiction, and venereal diseases, the money spent on gambling, pornography, and other forms of degradation and cultural nihilism. Besides, American culture is materialistic, mammonistic. It is a culture of developing, producing, and using technical things. It is a push-button civilization in which the poets and prophets are bemoaning the lack of spiritual discernment and appreciation. In fact, literature and drama abound in depicting the meaninglessness of life, as Tillich reminds us again and again.[9] Vanity of vanities, said the Preacher, all is vanity and a striving after wind (Eccl. 1:2). Man as cultural creature in the state of sin is as a horse in a treadmill; he never comes to the end of the road, he is never finished. Men of vision understand that progress is also a vain ideal, and a striving after wind. Man is at the end of his tether. He needs spiritual rejuvenation. He lives on death-row, but even a reprieve can give him no hope, for he is without Christ, hence without hope in the world. His chief delight is in the lust of the eyes, the lust of the flesh and the pride of life (I John 2:16), but these shall pass away with the fashions of this world. Modern man destroys himself, not only in war and crime and alcohol, but he destroys the family, that perfect unity of God's creative goodness, and thus disrupts the whole of society, uprooting states and nations with the solvent of sin. The perfect man is still an idle dream and the perfect society is a utopian illusion of man in his alienation from the source of true joy and peace. And the sad part of it is that the modern religious liberal negates the reality of sin and its destructive potency while piously prating about the establishment of the kingdom of God through man's cultural efforts. This is worse than spiritual blindness: it is blasphemy!

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[9] Paul Tillich, *Courage to Be* (New Haven, 1955), p. 143.

As a result of sin in this world there is now a division in the race, which makes for a cultural antithesis, based upon the spiritual bifurcation established by the God of heaven. This fact will be discussed in more detail in part three.

PART TWO

Historical Orientation

CHAPTER VI

AUGUSTINE, THE PHILOSOPHER OF SPIRITUAL ANTITHESIS AND CULTURAL TRANSFORMATION

Aurelius Augustine (A.D. 354-430), Bishop of Hippo, who through conversion was changed from a Roman rhetor to a Christian presbyter and preacher, is himself the classic example of cultural transformation through the power of the Gospel of Christ.[1] God so endowed this saint and so placed him in the course of history that because of him we may with good reason speak of a regeneration of society, a transformation of the Caesar-centered culture of imperial Rome to the church-centered culture of the Middle Ages.[2] For Augustine Christ is certainly the transformer of culture, as well as all of life, but his transformation does not deviate God's judgment against the corrupt and apostate cultures of this present world. Augustine does not deny the spiritual antithesis which God himself called into being by setting enmity between the seed of the serpent and the seed of the woman. History does not issue in a millennium without passing through the fire of judgment in which the sheep shall be separated from the goats. Augustine knows no universal salvation, but that is no reason to deny him consistency as an advocate of Christ as the transformer of culture.[3] For Augustine was a scriptural philosopher, whose reason was subject to the authority of revelation. Christ transforms men and their culture, but in history Christian culture (*civitas dei*) always exists within the framework of this present evil world, which lieth in darkness.

In short, Augustine is not a cultural optimist, who believes in culture as such, to redeem man and society. Neither is he a cultural pessimist in the Tertullian sense of condemning every form of culture simply because of its pagan origin and association. Augustine believes that the achievements of man's cultural striving must be permeated and transformed by Christian principles so that we develop a truly God-fearing and God-glorifying culture instead of the corrupt, God-defying culture of the world (*civitas terrena*).

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[1] Due to the nature of this study no attempt is made to summarize the life of Augustine or to present a survey of all his works in detail. Such summaries are available in any good college library. For a recent treatment of both life and works of Augustine I refer the reader to *A Companion to the Study of St. Augustine,* ed. Roy W. Battenhouse, (N.Y.: Oxford University Press, 1955); and, *Augustine: Leven Werken* by Dr. A. Sizoo, (J.H.Kok N.V.: Kampen, 1957).

[2] W. Richard Niebuhr, "Christ The Transformer of Culture," *Christ and Culture* (New York, 1951), p. 208.

[3] *Idem.* pp. 216-17.

Christianity's Impact before the Time of Augustine

Initially the spread of Christianity had been like that of a leaven, coming imperceptibly like the kingdom in the parable, without observation (Luke 17:20). But, during the second century, Christianity had openly confronted pagan culture. The golden age of Augustus has been celebrated by poets and rhetoricians. However, the messengers of Christ, like their master, came not with pomp and circumstance, but in the form of servants without excellency of speech (cf. I Cor. 2:1-4). The contemporary culture of pagan Rome was for the elite. From it the masses were excluded, and the vulgar populace was hated.[4] This opposition of the wise man to the mass man indicates how deeply the mind of Plato and Aristotle was ingrained in contemporary culture.

Christianity was destined to destroy the chasm created by classicism, with its culture for the elite, by preaching a gospel for all men.[5] For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God (Rom. 3:23). But not only did the Gospel make an appeal to all, it also claimed all of man. It was totalitarian in its demands. It had the audacity to claim finality for its message. It developed an offensive against the world on every front.

The imperceptible penetration of the Christian Gospel was due in part also to the fact that it was neglected and despised as just another Jewish cult. To Cicero, for example, the Jewish religion was nothing but a barbarian superstition. Seutonius and Tacitus speak of Christianity with the same disdain.

For the aristocratic Roman the question of truth was not as important as the care for and the glory of the state. His whole life was concerned with the cult of and service of the gods of the state. We ought to note the fact that the close relationship of cult and culture was characteristic of paganism as well as of Christianity. Socrates had been made to drink the poison cup because he refused to do obeisance to the city deities (it will be remembered that he was condemned as an atheist, and atheism was the great sin of Graeco-Roman culture) and Paul had observed that the people of Athens were very religious in his day. This devotion to the gods continued to characterize the empire in its heyday, so much so that the sack of Rome by Alaric in 410 was ascribed by pagan apologists to the fact that the ancient sacrifices had been abolished by Christians.

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[4] Cf. N. J. Hommes, *Cultuurgeschiedenis Van Het Christendom,* Vol. II, p. 5, who quotes Horatius' telling phrase, *Odi profanum vulgus et arceo.*

[5] Cf. Augustine's exegesis of I Tim. 2:1-4, where "all men" is not understood in the universalistic sense of the restoration of all through Christ, but it refers to all classes of men, kings as well as slaves, governors as well as artisans.

That cultus and culture are inseparable aspects of man's existence under the sun and rooted in his religion was also clearly understood by the Apologists of the third century, Cyprian and Tertullian. They fought a hard battle to uproot the long-accepted customs and traditions of paganism. They testified against such worldly amusements as the arena and the theater, circus and play. Deification of the emperor and the many forms of oath-taking and other ceremonies connected with the religion of the state were proscribed. Although it was recognized that it would be impossible always to avoid the terminology current in idolatry, yet it was considered a sin to swear by gods whom one had repudiated. In his treatise *On Idolatry,* Tertullian maintained that safety can be found only if, "Faith, her sails filled by the Spirit of God, navigates; safe if cautious, secure if intently watchful."[6]

Against the accusation that Christian abstinence reduced state revenue in luxury taxes, Tertullian answered that the state was not suffering loss since Christians were much more honest in paying what they owed than their pagan neighbors, who made false returns. When Christians were considered useless to society, Tertullian answered with passion that they were not alien to society and that they made use of the forum, the market place, the baths, stores, art shops, guesthouses and engaged in trade. "We together with you support shipping, military service and agriculture . . ." (*Ibid.* p. 48).

Whatever the faults of Tertullian may have been, and he was certainly guilty of Montanist heresies, we see him here as a knight in armour, as the champion of the cause of Christ in a hostile world. For, in the clash of Christianity with ancient culture, two worlds were in opposition, between whom no compromise was possible. Compromise was excluded simply because these worlds were religiously conditioned. In the final analysis, this was a conflict between the true and the false religions, in which no quarter was given. It was a matter of life and death, of overcoming or being overcome. Hence the hatred and vituperation against the confessors of the Christ. They were accused of treason to the state. Christianity was considered a threat to the Graeco-Roman cultural community. It introduced a new type of living among its members. They were impelled by the love of God and not of self (*Ibid.* p. 46).

The Conflict of Christianity and Paganism

Even before Augustine came upon the scene, the conflict was not restricted to questions of morality and worship, but there had been an intense wrestling of intellect between Christianity and paganism. All the weapons that dialectic and philosophy were able to marshal were assembled, and all the skill of literary art was brought to bear against the intruder that claimed universal homage to the truth of God.

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[6] *The Ante-Nicene Fathers,* Vol. III, (Grand Rapids, 1957), Chapter XXIV, p. 59.

Celsus (ca. A.D. 180) was justly concerned about the decline of the Roman state. He was a curious mixture of Platonic and Stoic wisdom with a dash of Agnosticism.[7] Although Celsus was cynical about religion, he considered it a fine weapon to keep the people in the right mind; hence he turned in fury against the confessors of Christ. He would have none of their mania for segregation and scored the insane fear of emperor worship. However, he would allow Christians the right to their own views, but pleads for unity to withstand the threat of the barbarians in the West. Since he is a politician and truth is not his concern, he offers the palm of peace after fierce denunciation and brutal threats.[8]

About a century later, Porphery, a Neoplatonist, who also influenced Augustine, carried on the great attack. Harnack calls his work against the Christians *The Testament of Hellenism.* Here the great contest between Classicism and Christianity is presented as the opposition of revelation and reason.[9] Porphery has been called the first rationalistic critic of the Bible. He wanted to defend the Olympian gods and restore the ancient wisdom and culture. But the reaction against him was so fierce that all his works were destroyed, and what we know of him we owe to fragments in Eusebius and Jerome. From these it is clear that he did not accept the Gospels as history but as myths and lies. Christ was to him a pathetic figure since he did not prove himself to be the Son of God to Satan, Herod, Pilate, and the Roman Senate. The ideas of incarnation and resurrection were absurd. Christianity was objectionable both intellectually and morally and as such constituted a barbaric threat to Greek culture and civilization.

Julian, the Apostate, the last passionate defender of paganism, had nothing new to offer. But he was greatly impressed by the church's concern for the sick, the poor, and those in misery, and advocated imitation of these virtues in an attempt to restore the worship of the Olympian deities. Happily, Julian's reign was cut short in his third year and his efforts came to nought. Even his works were destroyed, except for the fragments saved in the replies of Christian apologists, and his ravings were simply the death throes of the effete Graeco-Roman culture.

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[7] Dr. Hommes, *op. cit.,* p. 33.

[8] *Ibid.*

[9] Dr. Hommes, *op. cit.,* p. 32, Cf. also Charles Norris Cochrane, *Christianity and Classical Culture: A Study of Thought and Action from Augustus to Augustine* (New York, 1944), pp. 399, 412, 419, etc.

The Impact of Pagan Culture on Christianity

In spite of this religious and intellectual antithesis, pagan culture made a positive impact on its opponent. This simply demonstrates the well-known fact that one is influenced by what he opposes. Tertullian himself was an example of the many Christians who had been formed and trained by pagan rhetoric, which enabled them to defend the faith. Tertullian, as a matter of fact, had developed Latin as a theological language and surpassed Augustine in power of expression. But whereas the Latin Fathers, Cyprian and Tertullian, were extremely critical of classic culture and would concede only formal value to pagan learning – something in which Augustine followed their lead – the Greek Fathers, Origen and Clement of Alexandria, were carried away by their enthusiasm for classic culture. The former had a filial piety for Plato, whom he extolled as having seen the true *summum bonum* from afar, while the latter saw in Plato a prophet of Christ's kingdom.

Besides this influence in Rhetoric and Philosophy, we find that pagan art made an impact on the early church. From the practice of honoring the dead with annual festivities, there developed the art of decorating graves, which in turn gave a stimulus to painting and the production of mosaics. There is an admixture of pagan and Christian motifs discernible in these productions, although pagan gods and erotic scenes were taboo. Many of the frescoes portray love for the beautiful united with true piety. They tell of faith, hope and love and anticipation of the joy of Paradise. They created in the catacombs beneath the *eternal city* of Rome a witness to the heavens. The figure of Christ is also presented, as the most glorious of the children of men, being the first-born of the Father, the effulgence of his glory. The figure of the Suffering Servant, without form or comeliness, is not portrayed. This is due partially, no doubt, to the scorn and ridicule which had been poured out by Celsus and Julian against such a Saviour, and the Greek offense at the foolishness of the cross. The influence of ancient culture is also very prominent in architecture. The basilica, with its spacious enclosure and imposing pillars, was adapted from the forum to the church. And after Constantine made the new religion official in the realm, great numbers placed themselves under its protection. A tremendous building development took place, in which Constantine took a leading part in order to give the church permanence and honor in the realm.

Thus it becomes apparent that the antithesis between Classicism and Christianity, which is absolute in the religious sphere, was gradually diminished in the fields of art, and philosophy, so that a synthesis arose. From the Roman culture, in which the state was supreme and religion served the state, there was a gradual change to medieval culture, in which the church was supreme and the state became the handmaid.

Augustine: God Appointed Defender of the Faith

God in his providence called Augustine out of paganism to defend the faith at this critical juncture in history. The ancient world was coming apart at the seams, the old order was passing, but the new was waiting for the consecrated heart and genial spirit of this intellectual giant.

The political structure was crumbling under the hammer blows of the barbarians, while moral disintegration was proceeding apace. In philosophy the great systems had passed their heyday, and eclecticism and skepticism were in vogue. Although Augustine had been trained as a rhetorician and dialectician, he dabbled in Manichaeism, Skepticism, and finally landed in Neoplatonism from which he was converted in 386 at the age of thirty-three. Quite unlike Calvin, who testifies that he was suddenly converted from the coils of Roman superstition, it took Augustine a long time before he saw the errors of superstition, paganism, and heresy. As a matter of fact, he never fully escaped from the coils of pagan philosophy, and it took him a long time to see the full implications of his faith in the grace of God. Consequently, many movements in the Middle Ages and in modern times have sought their support in Augustine's writings and confess some affinity of spirit with him. Harnack sees him as the prophet of inwardness. Others say that Augustine was the first to discover personality. The Catholics, for their part, take their stand in Augustine's doctrine of the church, the Protestants maintain his doctrine of predestination, while the Rationalists in religion like to see him as the forerunner of Descartes' *cogito, ergo sum* (I think, therefore, I am).

It is not within the scope of this work to evaluate these varied claims or to enter into them in detail. This is not a monograph on Augustine, but it is safe to say that Augustine was a cultural philosopher of the first rank. He seeks to give an account to himself and his contemporaries of the relationship of the church to the world of culture. He was neither a cultural snob, despising fellow believers who did not have the same appreciation for the mighty products of the human spirit; nor was he a ghetto-Christian, seeking physical segregation from the world.

Augustine stood on the watershed of two worlds, as Warfield has expressed it. He was the mediator by which the culture of the one was transferred to the other. However, in and through him it was transformed from the clasical to a Christian culture. And herein lay the urgency of his intellectual enterprise. Someone has said that all his life was a search for the truth. But this ought to be qualified. After Augustine had found the Truth, namely, the Son of God who is the Truth, the Way and the Life, his search in the primary sense was over. But all the rest of his life he searched for a deeper implication of the Truth, and it was especially his faith that Christianity was intellectually and culturally respectable and responsible that kept him occupied.

Augustine as Thinker and Philosopher

This study does not concern itself with the philosophic disquisitions carried on by Augustine and his friends immediately after his conversion. It is interested only in his most mature thought as reflected in such works as: *On Christian Doctrine* (A.D. 396 and 426), *On the Trinity* (A.D. 400-428), *The City of God* (A.D. 413-426), the moral treatises, and the *Retractions,* which was finished four years before his death. It ought to be observed that the *Retractions* must be taken alongside of the *Confessions,* for they are a kind of reconsideration with respect to his former positions. For in them Augustine surveys his own progressive emancipation from pagan thought and his occasional lapses into classic thought patterns with a selfless detachment. Warfield even suggests that, given enough time, Augustine would have eradicated all the elements that were foreign to the doctrine of grace, which was the cornerstone of his system.[10]

Augustine repudiated the assumption that Neoplatonism and Christianity are compatible, and he urged the latter to defend itself against the former. Whereas Augustine in his earlier writings holds that there are two ways of finding truth, namely through reason and revelation, he came more and more to the conviction that man's natural reason is corrupted by sin and rejected it as a source of knowledge or a way of finding the truth. He did not make revelation subject to reason since "The minds of men are blinded by the pollutions of sin and the lust of the flesh."[11] Hence he regarded pagan philosophy as a medley of nonsense.[12] It is true, of course, that in his appraisal of the Platonists he found them far superior to all the other professional purveyors of the truth, yet he found them hopelessly inadequate; consequently he conclusively repudiated Platonism.[13]

Yet there are those who hold that "in general [Augustine] identified himself with its [neo-Platonic] temper and outlook. In Augustine's hand Christianity took on a neo-Platonic *Form,* when Augustinianism is rightly regarded as *Christian Platonism*."[14] The question is not whether stray elements of truth found in the Platonists may be used. Augustine believed that truth belongs to the saints and that the pagans are merely the unlawful possessors, who ought to be dispossessed, even as the Egyptians were relieved of gold and silver. Neither is the question whether Augustine was able to free himself completely from the coils of the Classical mind, for we find a good deal of synthesis. But when we use the term, *Christian Platonism,* we are putting Christianity into an adjectival position. According to this view, Augustine did on occasion subordinate "the distinctive faith principle of Christianity to that of an alien philosophy."[15] This is supported by the charge that his philosophy is open, idealistic, and personalistic.

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[10] B. B. Warfield, *Studies in Tertullian and Augustine* (New York, 1930), pp. 275-85.

[11] "Epist." 118 (to Dioscorus), 5, 32-33 as quoted by Warfield, p. 168, *op. cit.*

[12] *De Civitate Dei,* XVIII-41. Cf. Warfield, *op. cit.,* p. 160. Cf. *Civ. Dei,* Bk. VIII, Ch. 1-13.

[13] *Ibid.,* Bk. VIII, Ch. 1-13; Bk. X, Ch. 1-4; *Retract.* 1.

At the very outset let us remind ourselves that Augustine resolved never to deviate in the least from the authority of Christ (*Contra Academicos,* III, 20, 43). He considered it wrong to put reason above Scripture as source of authority; in fact, for Augustine the canonical Scriptures were "the revered pen of thy Spirit" (*Confessions,* VII, 27). Augustine believed in verbal inspiration and he accepted as corollaries the inerrancy, authority, and incomprehensibility of Scripture. Hence his famous phrase, "believe that you may understand" (*crede ut intellegas*).[16]

Man and the universe can be understood only by faith, which for Augustine is the response to divine revelation. The need for authority in order to gain knowledge was basic to his thought. He understood the fatal error of human autonomy in reason, of making the contingent self independent and the final reference point in the interpretative procedure. He realized fully the revolutionary position he proposed and considered it the only true philosophy. Thus, says Cochrane, he escaped from the delusions of materialism and idealism, because he saw that *form* and *matter* were but figments of the human mind (*Op. cit.* pp. 394ff.).

There is no antithesis between faith and reason in Augustine but reason is the sanctified instrument and servant of faith, never an autonomous entity usurping the authority of Scripture. Thus Augustine challenged the classical tradition that reason is objective and able to apprehend truth apart from faith. Augustine did not accept the autonomy of human reason, but the central-creative motif of his thought was the radical biblical one of creation, fall, and restoration through Jesus Christ.

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[14] Henry Stob, *Conference on Augustinian Thought* (A mimeographed report), p. 34.

[15] *Ibid.,* quoted by H. Stob from Alan Richardson, *Christian Apologetics,* p. 37.

[16] David Kerr, *Inspiration and Interpretation,* ed. John W. Walvoord, (Wm. B. Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, 1957), pp. 72, 74.

Besides, for Augustine the universe is never ultimate as in Plato, neither is the mind of man ultimate in achieving knowledge. Man as a creature is derivative in his being, and in his knowledge. True, in his response to the skeptics, Augustine argues that consciousness involves existence, knowledge, and will; but he also adds that limitation is involved in this consciousness so that the God-consciousness enters at the level of self-consciousness. The radical boundary between creator and creature, which is the first principle of a truly biblical philosophy, cannot be overleaped by reason. Man is subject, he is under law, and in this subjection lies his felicity. Cochrane is right in maintaining that Augustine's revolt was not against nature (he never tired of praising the goodness of the creation of God) but in that he rejected the Classical interpretation of nature, its cosmology and anthropology, constructed in terms of form and matter (*Op. cit.,* p. 410) .

Plato had begun with reason and, when that failed, he turned to the myths of the poets, which is the very opposite of Augustine, who began with faith in the revelation and on its basis develops a Christian philosophy, an intelligible understanding of the created universe. Tertullian had already understood that man, involved in the flux of time and space, needs a vantage point from which to gain leverage, from which he can overlook the whole; hence Plato should have waited until he died before he philosophized (*nondum moru philosophabatur,* Cochrane, p. 414) .

To say that Augustine stood in the idealistic tradition of Plato is to overlook the fact that Augustine actually reverses Plato's *arche,* for his principle of interpretation is abstract but personal, the triune God of revelation. Thus not only man's reason is saved, but his whole personality.[17] The point is that human knowledge was not original and underived, as for Plato, but analogical and derived since man is God's creature. "The ultimate ground of our certitude becomes our confidence in God. In the last analysis, God is our surety for the validity of knowledge; and that not merely remotely, as the author of our faculties of knowing, but also immediately as the author of our every act of knowing, and the truth which is known" (Warfield, *Op. cit.,* p. 149) . For Augustine all knowledge, both of the sensible and intelligible worlds, is by revelation through Christ, the Word. And since the soul is simple, knowledge does not merely involve the intellect but the whole man (*Idem,* p. 151) . Augustine took the doctrine of creation seriously. Man is finite and mystery lies at the heart of knowledge. Man matures slowly; hence his advance is limited. Man is a sinner, whose mind is darkened. In this mortal state, authority is the necessary pedagogue, revelation is a palliative, but grace is the cure.

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[17] Cochrane, *op. cit.,* p. 384 esp. pp. 412ff. for the implications of the Trinitarian formula for the pursuit of knowledge.

But since faith is not a substitute for reason, we do not substitute superstition for science when we accept the Christian solution, but we choose a salutary faith instead of a destructive one. This indicates that Augustine in his day knew that the set of a man's mind is determined by the allegiance of his heart. He opposed the scientism of Classicism which claimed the right to legislate for man's whole existence under the sun.

It is no derogation to say that the system of Augustine is open, if we mean that he did not come to perfect unity and wholeness, and that there are contradictions here and there. He would have been the first to admit this, since no one has all of the truth. But his system was not open in the sense that it lacked determination of style. The doctrine of the counsel of God, the trinity, creation, fall, and redemption determine his philosophy completely. So too, we cannot call Augustine an Idealist or a Personalist in the current sense without doing violence to his basic presuppositions. Plato's god is finite, and in his system man is the ultimate interpreter of reality, the final reference for interpretation. But for Augustine man is an image-bearer who must learn to think God's thoughts after him, thoughts which God has impressed upon the world and for which man's intellect is fashioned. But personality does not participate in divinity in Augustine's system of truth.

Of course, no one would care to maintain that there are no unresolved elements in Augustine, or to deny that there is a good deal of synthesis with pagan thoughts. The important thing, however, is to observe the great antithesis he placed between ancient-pagan thought and Christian thought. This disjunction is signalized as an opposition of revelation to reason, and of grace to human merit.

Religion as Determinative for Man's Life as a Whole

As a cultural philosopher, Augustine made religion determinative for man's whole existence, not a thing apart. He believed with Paul that in Christ all things must be reconciled to the Father.

True Education Seeks to Understand the Holy Scriptures

Among the most important things in any culture is the understanding of symbols. Words are signs of things (cf. *Concerning the Teacher*), but one must make sure that he reads words aright. Augustine wrote his work *On Christian Teaching* (four books) to show how one may read Scripture aright and how what has been read may best be communicated, thus making this a manual on exegesis and the art of preaching.

Science, in the book just mentioned, refers only to the study and the proclamation of the Holy Scriptures. In that light Augustine judges the sciences of his day. Do they contribute to the right understanding of the Word of God? For this we must study language and rhetoric, figurative speech and foreign languages.

Augustine was rather critical of the liberal education of his day on the ground that it did not educate, that it did not bring one knowledge of the truth, which is in God. Although such education did spell admission to the community of culture, yet it multiplied grief and toil to the sons of Adam (*Confessions,* I, 9, 14). Augustine decried the tendency to study dead subjects and dead ideas, together with administration of discipline in the traditional manner with the teacher's ferule, by which all spontaneity was stifled. He complains of the unreality of the ancient masters and deplored stage-plays because of their basic falsity. On the other hand, in the gladiatorial spectacles the tragedy was real enough, but instead of the catharsis it was supposed to achieve, they served as an irritant to whip the frenzied passions of the populace to a white heat.

Augustine agreed with Cicero that wisdom was the foundation of rhetorial excellence. However, the wisdom of pagan culture in evidence all around him in the law courts and the Senate, where the orator was symbolic of the pride and vainglory of the unregenerate man, was intoxicated with the wine of error. By such training the student imbibed the false ideals of classical civilization, in which it was considered a greater crime to murder the word "human being" than to murder a human being (Cochrane, p. 393). But, in the end, all this was a waste of precious energy, since motion apart from an intelligible and worthy goal is vanity. The knowledge which was supposed to bring liberty from the chains of sense and the concupiscence of the flesh was vanity; "secular education was worse than useless; by itself it was like salt water which, so far from slaking, aggravates thirst" (Cochrane, p. 394). In his own case, says Augustine, his education had taught him to utter lies in which he was applauded by those who knew he was lying.

Augustine does not mean to suggest by this adverse judgment that his training was altogether devoid of merit, since he had acquired habits of obedience and industry with the help of the master's cane. The advantage in the main was intellectual, since it developed in him an attitude of critical awareness toward much of the pretentious nonsense of the time and particularly against the fallacies of Manichean superstition. Most of all, it equipped him with "solid linguistic foundation indispensable to an intelligent study of truth where this could really be found" (*Idem,* p. 394).

The knowledge of the sciences of history, zoology and astronomy, and of the fields of industry, agriculture, navigation and medicine, although incidental, are useless, unless, indeed, one had his calling in such a field. Dialectics and mathematics are useful subjects because they teach the logical connection of propositions and the unchangeable laws of God, which man has discovered. But that which may be known and the knower are both subject to God's laws and their fruitful connection is due to God's creative and providential activity.

With respect to philosophy, Augustine held that we are to dispossess the pagans if they have discovered any truth, just as the Israelites robbed the Egyptians of their gold and silver and claimed it for the tabernacle service. What was formerly used unworthily by the heathen must be claimed for Christ in the proclamation of the truth.[18]

With respect to the apparent lack of cultural form in the Bible, Augustine contends that they who say the Bible lacks style and beauty have greatly erred. Since the message is of prime importance, the form must be the handmaid of prophet and apostle. Since words are not ends in themselves, we do not find excessive verbosity. Hence we see Christian culture turning away from the turgid, unrealistic style of pagan orators to directness and simplicity in expression.

Augustine himself sought to exemplify this simplicity in his sermons, and some of his shorter treatises addressed to the common man. The principles of our spiritual warfare against Satan and the implications of the creed are thus set forth.[19]

Augustine's Ethics versus Pagan Aesthetics

In considering the ethical treatises of Augustine, H. Bavinck's judgment that no other church Father stands as close to the Reformed tradition should be noted. For Augustine substituted the ethical for the aesthetic *Weltanschauung* (world and life-view) of the Greeks, the Christian for the Classical. For example, Augustine wrote two treatises on *Lying* (A.D. 395, 420) in which he discusses eight kinds of lies, which are all condemned. We find no relativism here, let alone the studied falsities of pagan life. Again, Augustine opposes the Platonic-Aristotelian deprecation of work, the portion of slaves, unworthy of free men. *Of the Work of Monks* is his special treatise directed against the excesses of the monastic movement, pointing out the scriptural doctrine of labor and its emphasis on the "lower forms" of culture, such as agriculture and hand labor. Since no man can pray all the time, says Augustine, the monks ought to pray and work (*ora et labora*) ; one can sing and pray while he works. To follow the injunction of Christ: "Be not anxious for the morrow," does not invalidate the Pauline prescription that no man should eat unless he worked. Even Paul, the apostle, although he had a right to live off the gospel, worked with his hands.[20]

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[18] *On Christian Doctrine,* II, 40:60. This idea was not, however, original with Augustine since Origen had already proposed this same solution.

[19] Vide, *The Warfare of the Christ* (A.D. 395), and *The Mirror* (A.D. 427).

[20] Cf. D. H. Th. Vollenhoven, *Het Calvinisme en de Reformatie Van de Wijsbegeerte* (Amsterdam, 1933), p. 137; A. Zijlstra, *Tenzij-Scriftuurlijke Beginselen voor het Staatsleven,* (Amsterdam, 1950), pp. 235, 239.

"The first natural bond of human society is man and wife," which remains intact after procreation has ceased. Marriage is a good given in creation whereby youthful incontinence is put to good use in begetting children, "in order that out of the evil of lust the marriage union may bring to pass some good."[21] Marriage is a means unto an end, namely, the propagation of children, but, if not used for this end, sexual intercourse becomes sinful, though venial. In 419 Augustine returns to treat the same subject because the Pelagians had said that his doctrine of original sin condemned marriage. His reply is that "Marriage is no more impeachable on account of original sin which is derived therefrom, than the evil of fornication and adultery is excusable on account of the natural good which is born of them."[22]

Augustine repeats his praise of marriage as a natural good given by God for begetting seed unto regeneration. He opposes the Manichaean doctrine that procreation corrupts the purity of the soul, but holds that original sin is transmitted by the lust of concupiscence in the act of procreation. For him the natural sex desire (hunger) is lust; hence to satisfy it except for propagating the race is sin. This accounts, no doubt, for Augustine's praise of virginity, celibacy, and widowhood and chastity (continence) in marriage. But if such chastity be found among pagans, it is not truly a virtue, for "Whatsoever is not out of faith is sin" (Rom. 14:23). The sin of incontinence, in this case, is merely overcome by another sin like pride or selfishness, so that seeming virtue becomes a splendid vice (*Ibid.* I, 4). However, the censoring of lust may never be interpreted as a condemnation of marriage (*Ibid.* I, 6). Shameful concupiscence came with the fall; however, the divine command to replenish the earth was valid from the fall to Christ in order to raise up a people for God and the promised Seed. Since the coming of Christ, although marriage is still there for those who cannot contain themselves, procreation is no longer a divine command, since the church is universal and God has many children through the preaching of the Gospel. Hence marriage becomes a lesser good in comparison with celibacy, widowhood, and virginity.[23]

The sex ethics of Augustine reveal, to my mind, several influences. There is a remnant of Manichaeism with its deprecation of the body and of marriage. The mysticism of Neoplatonism is not missing, according to which the soul must be freed from the contamination of the body. Besides, there may be a reaction here to Augustine's own struggle against the flesh. Last, but not least, this reflects the church's fight against the perversion of sex in Roman society as a whole. However, I think we may say with confidence that Augustine did not sacrifice his scriptural principle of authority with its doctrines of creation, fall, and redemption. We may not agree with his interpretation of Scripture on the sole end of sex in marriage or even on the advisability of choosing the unmarried state for the sake of the service of Christ, but his aim to replace the Classical with a Christian ideal is very evident. Augustine's pilgrim may show too much contempt for the world (*contemptus mundi*) and may be too ascetic in his practice, but, when we consider this pilgrim over against the Greek worldling, "who sought religion in the worship of Venus, or Bacchus, and who flattered himself in hero-worship, debased his honor as a man in the veneration of prostitutes, and at last sank lower than the brutes in pederasty,"[24] we thank God for the power of the Gospel which changed Augustine himself and initiated medieval culture.

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[21] *On the Good Marriage,* (I, 1, 3).

[22] *On Marriage and Concupiscence,* (I, 1).

[23] *On Holy Virginity, On the Good of Widowhood, On Marriage and Concupiscence.*

From the foregoing it ought to be clear that Augustine was not sympathetic toward the anti-cultural claims of exclusivistic Christians who advocated complete wtihdrawal from the world, as did the Donatists. Neither could he second the extravagant language of Tertullian, "What has Athens to do with Jerusalem? What concord is there between the Academy and the Church? . . . We want no curious disputation after possessing Christ Jesus, nor inquisition after enjoying the Gospel!"[25] However, we ought not, on that account, to put Augustine in the class of the cultural optimists, who seek to accommodate their faith to the demands of the prevailing cultural norms and ideals. Rather did he seek to transform contemporary culture from pagan to Christian, from God-denying to a God-glorifying human endeavor.

Augustin'e Concept of the Antithesis

Finally, let us take a look at *The City of God (De Civitate Dei,* A.D. 413-426) which, next to the *Confessions,* is the most famous of Augustine's works. When Rome fell in 410, the pagans said it was due to the fact that the ancient sacrifices had been proscribed by the Christians. This aroused Augustine's zeal for the house of God. Although the care of all the churches in his bishopric weighed heavily upon him, and from time to time his attention was diverted by the necessity of writing lesser apologetic treatises, at long last he finished twenty-two books at the age of seventy-two and called it *The City of God.* He took the name from Psalm 87:3 "Glorious things are spoken of thee, O city of God."

In the first five books Augustine refutes the contention that human happiness depends upon the worship of pagan deities and that neglect of this cultus brings disaster. Secondly, five books are directed against those who will admit that adversities have appeared in history before this, but that worship is important for the life to come. With this negative apologetic finished, Augustine presents a positive defense of Christianity in the remaining twelve books. Four deal with the origin of the two kingdoms, four with their development, and four portray the appointed end of these kingdoms.

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[24] Abraham Kuyper, *Calvinism: Six Stone Foundation Lectures.* (Grand Rapids, 1943), p. 117.

[25] *On Prescription against Heretics.* VII.

Actually the two cities are two metaphysical entities; that is to say, one cannot find them on land or sea in concrete things. They have a spiritual existence, they are spiritual forces in opposition.

In his *Commentary on Genesis* (A.D. 394), Augustine had set forth the two loves *(amores)* which are the origin of the opposition (XI, 20). The two states, therefore, are based on an antithesis, which is radical (going down to the root).

Soon after this, in his treatise *On Catechising the Uninstructed* (A.D. 400), Augustine names the two kingdoms allegorically, Jerusalem and Babylon. In the first, the citizens are all the sanctified people that ever have been, are now and shall be, of which our Lord Jesus is King. Jerusalem signifies the communion of the saints. Babylon, on the other hand, signifies the communion of the godless, for Babylon spells confusion. These two kingdoms are found in the human race from its beginning, mutually intermingling through the changes of time, until the end judgment (31, 36, 37).

It is crystal clear that the main purpose of Augustine is not simply to answer the virulent attack of the pagans against the church after the sack of Rome, but it is rather to show the radical nature of the basic antithesis under the figure of the two cities. The nature of these cities is set forth thus: "Accordingly, two cities have been formed by two loves: the earthly by the love of self, even to the contempt of God; the heavenly by the love of God, even to the contempt of self. The former, in a word, glories in itself, the latter in the Lord. For the one seeks glory from men; but the greatest glory of the other is God, the witness of the conscience. The one lifts up its head in its own glory; the other says to its God, 'Thou art my glory, and the lifter up of mine head' (Ps. III:3) . . . The one delights in its own strength, represented in the persons of its rulers; the other says to its God, 'I love Thee, O Lord, my strength' (Ps. XVIII:1). And therefore the wise men of the one city, living according to man, have sought for profit to their own bodies or souls, or both, and those who have known God 'glorified Him not as God, neither were thankful, but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened; professing themselves to be wise,' — that is, glorying in their own wisdom and being possessed by pride, — 'they became fools, and changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and four-footed beasts, and creeping things'. For they were either leaders or followers of the people in adoring images, 'And worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed forever' (Rom. I:21-25). But in the other city there is no human wisdom, but only godliness, which offers due worship to the true God, and looks for its reward in the society of the saints, of holy angels as well as holy men, 'that God may be all in all' (I Cor. XV:28)" (Bk. XIC, Ch. 28).

This is truly the picture of the kingdom in which Christ is sovereign. Originally there was but a kingdom where God was recognized and worshipped in sinless perfection by the angels. Then came the defection in heaven, later the defection of man upon earth, so that the seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent are now living in juxtaposition in this world. One seeks to walk after the spirit, the other lives for the flesh (XIV, 1, 4; XV, 1).

In the kingdom of this world *(civitas terrena),* the principle of order is found in the love of self *(amor sui),* which seeks satisfaction of physical needs, preservation of the individual and of the race. The distinctive attitude and mark of the worldly kingdom is the lust for possession, which in its natural development corrupts personality, family, and states. However, the secular mind does value a certain mechanical order which comes to expression in peace of the household, city, and state *(pax domestica, pax civica, pax Romana).* The household, which depends upon the union of male and female is the seed-bed of the city, which in turn develops the imperial state. The common denominator between these three is the fact that they depend for their existence upon the will of man, a common interest in some good, as, for example, justice.

It is clear that Augustine does not mean to imply that the secular state seeks only material things; it is rather concerned with that which is temporal, pertaining to the mortal life. The attitude of possession instead of that of stewardship spells exploitation, which leads to internal strife and wars. Thus fear rules the hearts of men. The greatest nations have simply been brigands on a grand scale (IV, 6). Conflict is the inevitable accompaniment of organized secular society; hence achievements become illusory and transitory (XV, 4, 5). From the beginning the builders of the worldly city have been fraticides, as witness Cain, and, according to Roman legend, Romulus, the founder of Rome, also slew his brother.

The creation of the Pantheon, picturing pagan polytheism, was but an attempt to rationalize and justify the order of fear and exploitation, presenting a kind of ideology of power (cf. Cochrane, p. 497). But security was an illusion; the superstition of today became the cult of tomorrow, while the use of religion as an instrument of social discipline was its destruction. The pagan gods were unable to furnish valid norms for morality, since their sacred rites were the most shameless (*De Civ. Dei,* II, 4, 5, 6, *et passim*). The gods are always merely used in the service of a knowledge that is carnal (*scientia*) which, instead of unveiling the truth (*sapientia*) simply conceals ignorance (*op. cit.* p. 500).

The order in the City of God, on the other hand, is the order of love. The love of power here becomes the power of love. This is a gift of grace and finds expression in thinking God's thoughts after him, imitating the incarnation, as Warfield once expressed it. Justification by faith spells regeneration of the individual and social reformation (*Idem,* p. 501).

Relationship of Church and State

Although, as observed above, the two kingdoms do not come to expression in concrete realities in history, they do have their exponents here upon earth. *Civitas Dei* is revealed in the Israel of the Old Testament and the church of the New Testament, Christ in promise and fulfillment. *Civitas Terrena* came to crystallization in Assyria in the East and in Rome in the West. Before Christ no citizen of God's kingdom was found in the worldly kingdom; now they are mixed, although the worldlings predominate in political states. This does not deter from the good in earthly states, for God has displayed in the glorious empire of Rome what may be achieved by civil virtues even apart from the true religion, in order that, when it should arrive, men might become citizens of that other state, whose King is truth, whose law is love, and whose duration is forever.[26]

Although Augustine is not always clear on this matter, yet on the whole, we may say that the church may not be identified with the kingdom of God. Church and kingdom cannot be equated because the former has many hypocrites in it, members of *civitas terrena.* But although the two may not be identified, nevertheless, in the church the appearance of the kingdom is concentrated. In like manner, the kingdom of this world (*civitas terrena*) is revealed in political states, but it may not be identified with them. It is even conceivable that there should be a state made up exclusively of citizens of *civitas dei.*

In summary, Augustine's political philosophy was an outgrowth of his conversion and his religious insights obtained from revelation. Since man and his world are derived from and dependent upon the creator their meaning also is defined by God. History is not an endless cycle, a turning wheel but an order of events involving progress to its God-appointed goal, namely, the realization of the kingdom of God.

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[26] *Ep.* 133; 3, 17 as quoted by Sizoo, p. 316.

This finds expression in the kingship of Christ over the citizens of *civitas dei,* but also in his present rule over all the kingdoms of this earth, which the Father has committed to the Son.

A Christian Concept of the State

Although Augustine did not negate Plato and Cicero formally, nevertheless we may call his a Christian concept of state. He rejects the idea that the state is a purely natural phenomenon arising out of the gregarious instinct of man, or a rational creation due to fear. He will agree that there is nothing so human as sociability, but on the other hand, that there is nothing so universal as sin. The state is the creature of God to keep sin in check, to save society from chaos.

"Classical sociology, following its scientific methodology has always conceived of society as a fixed principle of human life buttressed by the natural force of human propagation or the rational force of efficient satisfaction of human needs such as the means of livelihood, shelter, education or protection."[27] But Augustine holds these matters to be external merely and rejects the idea that the state ought to embrace the totality of man's existence, and that it provides the good life. The state does not make the man, as in Aristotle, but man as creature of God in his fallen condition was given protection under God's ministers, who do not bear the sword in vain (*Civitas Dei,* V, 24).

Neither is the source of authority for Augustine above God and men, but it comes directly from God, whose moral law is the eternal ground of all temporal laws and of the order of justice in the world. But what of the justice of which Plato and Cicero boasted? The reply of Augustine is that justice has never been achieved in any earthly state (*Ibid.* XIX, 21, 17, 24). This may be proved on the pagan definition itself. Justice is giving everyone his due. But God never did get his due, namely, worship from his creatures. Hence, no justice. Besides, right control over the body can only be achieved when the soul serves God. Therefore, only the redeemed know what justice is, and it is found only in the republic whose founder and ruler is Christ. However, although Augustine limits the pretensions of the state by denying it totalitarian prerogatives, he does not say that some relative justice cannot be achieved. It is also possible to reach such practical objectives as peace and harmony in civil life. These limited objectives are within the competence of the state as a God-ordained instrument; hence we owe it obedience, honor, and service. The state also controls property and has the right to wage war (*Ibid.,* XIX, 15, 17). But this obedience we owe her is mandatory only as long as the state pursues the ends relative to our temporal society. Political power finds its restriction in the right of the citizen to worship God. Since the power of the state is limited by the will of God, this power loses its validity and legality when God's will is flouted.

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[27] S. Richey Kamm, *Conference on Augustinian Thought,* Mimeographed report by Department of Bible and Philosophy, Wheaton College, p. 54.

Augustine rejects the idea that a universal law of nature, which is binding upon all intelligent beings, is the basis of constitutional government. Since man is a sinner, the true basis of the state is the character of its citizens as regenerated sons of God, who embrace the sovereignty of God over their being, whereby they are made willing servants in the external realization of his will, by obeying governments. Consequently, the bearers of authority must know themselves to be bound by the law of God, and the ideal is that they should be pious Christians themselves. "It is here that the safety of an admirable state resides; for a society can neither be ideally founded nor maintained unless upon the basis and by the bond of faith and strong concord, when the object of love is universal good which in its highest and truest character is God Himself, and when men love one another with complete sincerity in Him, and the ground of their love for one another is the love of Him from whose eyes they cannot conceal the spirit of their love."[28]

It should be noted that Augustine places the church alongside of the state, autonomous in its own sphere, which constitutes a total change from Cicero and Plato. The state has a temporal goal, but the church an eternal one; therefore it is higher than the state. However, in temporal things the church must obey the state, while the state is subject to the church in things eternal. While the church maintains the authority of the state over its subjects, the latter must seek the welfare of the former. Whereas Augustine had initially opposed using the power of the sword for the punishment of heretics, he changed his mind when he saw the practical effects in subduing the Donatists. He rationalized his view on the basis of the admonition of Christ that we must constrain them to enter into the kingdom. However, he was not in favor of taking financial aid from the state, because he feared the gradual infiltration of its power. Whereas Ambrose was happy to have the church serve in cases of litigation, Augustine did not approve of it. But as a matter of practical necessity, he was often called to adjudicate cases and went to court to see that his members received their due. Since the Roman state was collapsing and confusion reigned, the church often stepped into the breach to save society from chaos.

Final Evaluation

In this crisis of history it was the church that saved culture, and it was in the providence of God that Augustine became the man of the hour. His prodigious labors were characterized by his burning heart of love, his loyalty to Scripture, his brilliance of intellect, and his consuming zeal for the house of God. He was fully conscious of the fact that the church's warfare is not with flesh and blood, but against the spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places (Eph. 6:12). The weapons of his warfare were not carnal but mighty before God to the casting down of strongholds (II Cor. 10:4).

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[28] *Ep.* 137; 17 *ad Volusianum.*

In our evaluation of Augustine as cultural philosopher *par excellence,* we ought to remember that he struggled all his life to escape the coils of pagan culture. There is no doubt that he increasingly saw the implications of God's revelation in Scripture. However, he undoubtedly did not overcome the danger of synthesis with pagan thought. There is a certain amount of pagan mysticism in his idea that the state is the body and the church the soul. There is also an unnatural dualism in the idea that the state looks after the natural needs of man and the church after the spiritual needs. The depreciation of the body is also found in Augustine's praise of virginity, celibacy, and widowhood over against marriage. Although Augustine praises creation as good, he did not fully appreciate the cultural nature of marriage as a fellowship of love between man and wife, even apart from the begetting of children. For in the complementation of male and female, as God established marriage by bringing Eve to Adam, there is involved the development of both personalities in the fulfillment of the broader cultural task. The inspiration of love unto cultural achievement and the subduing of nature need not be in competition with nor detract from the obedience of the cultural mandate. Augustine realized this when he spoke of possessing the things of this world (wives included) as not being possessed by them; however, he continues to establish a false antithesis between our love of God and our love-life in marriage.

Secondly, we find a certain uncertainty in Augustine's concept of the church. Sometimes he identifies the church with the kingdom of God, and it consists of the elect as a spiritual elite in the eternal organization, which in turn serves the state. On the other hand, the kingdom of God *(civitas Dei)* is sometimes for all practical purposes identical with the church as hierarchical organization, which seeks to save the state and bring it to its fullest realization. However, in his maturest thought the state is not the highest entity in society but the church, and the Christian state must serve the church.

A third example of this tendency toward synthesis may be found in his ethics. Augustine does not go to the moral law and develop it, when speaking of Christian virtue, but he simply takes the classic virtues of Aristotle and Plato and reinterprets them on the principle of love; "temperance is love keeping itself entire and incorruptible for God; fortitude is bearing everything readily for the sake of God;

justice is love serving God only, and therefore ruling well all else as subject to man; prudence is love making a right distinction between what helps it towards God and what might hinder it."[29]

However, this very synthesis, the combining of one culture with another, is, on the other hand, also an evidence of Augustine's main emphasis, namely transformation. Pagan virtues are transformed by Christian love. The perverse culture produced by man's corrupt nature in apostasy from God must now become permeated with the love for God *(amor Dei)* in order that creation, which is good, may once more serve the purpose of the creator. When the fundamental relation of the soul to God has been restored, all other relationships are brought back into focus. Augustine believed that peace with God precedes peace in the home, in society, and in the state. The earthly state too must be converted, transformed into a Christian state by the permeation of the kingdom of God within her, since true righteousness can only be under the rule of Christ.

Not only in the realm of ethics and politics must conversion take place, for truly friendship and all the virtues are but splendid vices, being vitiated by egoism and idolatrous ends, and this also holds for knowledge and science. Apart from Christ, man's wisdom is but folly, because it begins with faith in itself and proclaims man's autonomy. The redeemed man, on the other hand, begins with faith and reason in subjection to the laws placed in this universe by God: he learns to think God's thoughts after him. All of science, fine art and technology, conventions of dress and rank, coinage, measures and the like, all of these are at the service of the redeemed man to transform them for the service of his God.

I have denominated Augustine, therefore, the philosopher of cultural transformation. But at the same time he maintains the antithesis. This does not, to my mind, express a contradiction as H. Richard Niebuhr would interpret it.[30] Niebuhr thinks in terms of a liberal post-millennialism, in which universal salvation is the counterpart to the universal kingship of Christ. Augustine is much more biblical, when he maintains that a large segment of the human race will not be converted, so that he envisages an antithesis extending to the end-judgment. What he means by conversion of culture is not the eradication of evil and sin from this earth, but the radical transformation of the individual by redemption so that his whole life is transformed, also as a cultural being. I cannot agree that Augustine gives up his "hope of the conversion of culture" when he turns to defend Christian culture (*Idem,* p. 216). In Augustine we never find an antagonism to culture as such, but he takes the offensive when confronted by an antagonistic culture whose triumph would imply the liquidation of Christianity. Therefore I cannot agree with Emile Cailliet in designating Augustine's a "Cloistered Wisdom" of the Idealist, who neglects "the reality of sense experience."[31] In order to make possible this interpretation of the first great philosopher of history in the church, Cailliet restricts himself to the four works written immediately after Augustine's conversion and to *On the Immortality of the Soul.* He then proceeds to tell us that the bishop of Hippo, who loved truth and tells us in minute detail how he sought the truth in everything, has given us a false presentation of his conversion. Moreover, Augustine, who was one of the greatest psychological observers and who succeeded in giving posterity the most intimate view of his spiritual experience, is now psychoanalyzed and we are told that Augustine was not converted to Christianity but to Neoplatonism (*Idem,* p. 145). Dr. Warfield met these arguments, which are now rehashed from Boissier and Harnack, in his day (*Op. cit.,* p. 235ff.).

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[29] *On the Morals of the Catholic Church,* XV.

[30] *Christ and Culture,* (New York, 1951), pp. 216, 217.

To conclude, Augustine, the philosopher of the cultural antithesis and regeneration believed in the restoration of the whole man in Christ, to whom the whole world has been given under Christ. It was his solemn goal to bring every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ, for he believed passionately, "All things are yours, . . . and ye are Christ's; and Christ is God's" (I Cor. 3:21, 23).

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[31] *The Christian Appraisal of Culture,* (New York, 1953), p. 144.

CHAPTER VII

JOHN CALVIN: CULTURAL THEOLOGIAN AND REFORMER OF THE WHOLE LIFE

John Calvin (1509-64) was a second generation Reformer, building on the foundation laid by Luther and Zwingli. This fact by no means implies that he was merely a reproducer and copyist.[1] Calvin not only made an original contribution to theology, but also to the realm of culture. In fact, he might be called the theologian of culture, *par excellence.*

At twenty-two Calvin was settled in Paris as a promising humanist scholar. He had made his debut into the world of letters with his commentary on Seneca's *Treatise on Clemency* (1532). A year later he experienced a sudden conversion. According to Calvin's own testimony he was already "too obstinately devoted to the superstitions of Popery to be easily extricated from so profound an abyss of mire." However, "God by a sudden conversion subdued and brought my mind to a teachable frame, which was more hardened in such matters than might have been expected from one at my early period of life."[2]

Through this experience, like Augustine before him, Calvin was transformed into a new creature (II Cor. 5:17). From a seeker of self, he became a seeker of God's honor and the edification of the church (*Ibid.,* pp. XLI-XLIX). Calvin soon became deeply conscious of a dual calling, namely, to the Gospel ministry and to the role of reformer. Immediately after his conversion, he tells us, many came to him for instruction and looked to him for leadership. Whereas he was extremely shy and timid by nature, he was now suddenly cast into the limelight. Leadership was veritably thrust upon him. This was partly achieved by the dire imprecations of Farel, who in 1536 held Calvin fast in Geneva for the work of the Reformation. Later, Calvin's superb talents and excellent training naturally asserted themselves so that his colleagues accepted him as the *primus inter pares* and willingly accepted his leadership.[3]

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[1] Doumergue, "Calvin: Epigone or Creator?", *Calvin and the Reformation* (New York, 1909), pp. 1-55.

[2] *Preface, Commentary on the Book of Psalms* (Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1949), p. XL.

[3] *Ibid.,* pp. XLI, XLII, XLIII; cf. *Letter to Sadoleto;* Phil. Fritz Büsser; *Calvins Urteil Uber sich selbst* (Zurich, 1950), p. 93f.

While he was living in exile under an assumed name in Basel, Calvin published the first edition (1536) of what was to become his life's work, and the greatest single, Protestant theological masterpiece of all time, *The Institutes of the Christian Religion.*[4] In this his first great literary venture for the Reformation, Calvin defended his compatriots in France against the calumnies of Francis I. This wily monarch, in trying to conciliate the German princes, sought to justify his persecutions of the French Protestants by calling them anarchists. Calvin repudiated this by showing that the Reformed citizens of France were willing to be subject to the God-constituted authority, but that they had foresworn their allegiance to popery. But Calvin produced more than an apology. His work became a manifesto to the world of the Protestant faith. It served also as a creedal statement to unite the hard pressed Protestant churches of France and the continent against Rome, on the one hand, and against the Anabaptists and the Humanists, on the other.

That Calvin rejected the authority of the pope and of the hierarchy in religious matters is abundantly attested. But his rejection of the autonomy of man's reason as the final reference point in knowledge is equally clear. Hence it is an abuse of language, if not an eggregious error, to say that Calvin remained a Humanist all his life. No one, of course, would deny that Calvin had grown up in the atmosphere of Humanistic learning in Paris and had experienced its fascinating influence. Humanism is a daughter of the Renaissance. It substituted the pagan ideal of the beautiful soul in a beautiful body, with its emphasis on man's life under the sun, for the medieval goal of the vision of God. It was an aesthetic-philological movement rather than a philosophical one. Nevertheless, man was the measure of all things. Form was glorified over against the essence, or content. Humanism also lacked ethical seriousness. This became evident in its greatest representative, Erasmus of Rotterdam, who was irrevocably alienated from the cause of the Reformation by Luther's treatise on the bondage of the will. Although everyone would grant that Calvin used the tools of his Humanistic learning and training and that he appreciated its techniques, he was just as resolute in rejecting the spirit of Humanism as Luther had been before him.[5]

Calvin as Theologian of the Word

The Protestant Reformation, says Warfield, "was the greatest revolution of thought which the human spirit has wrought since the introduction of Christianity."[6] Calvin's contemporaries considered him *The Theologian* by way of eminence, and it was Melanchthon, the intimate friend of Luther, who gave him this title. Although Luther, the hero of Wittenburg, created Protestantism, it was Calvin, as the genius of Geneva that saved it.[7] On all hands Calvin has been recognized as the systematizer of Protestant theology. However, it has not always been appreciated that he was also an original student of Scripture, who made some contributions as a dogmatician. Dr. B. B. Warfield, who has done as much in modern times as any to understand Calvin's theology and to give it prominence, says, "He made an epoch in the history of the doctrine of the Trinity by his insistence on self-existence as a proper attribute of Son and Spirit as well as of the Father, he drove out the lingering elements of subordinationism, and secured to the Church a deepened consciousness of the co-equality of the divine Persons. He introduced the presentation of the work of Christ under the rubrics of the three-fold office of Prophet, Priest, and King. He created the whole discipline of Christian ethics. But above all he gave to the Church the entire doctrine of the Work of the Holy Spirit, profoundly conceived and wrought out in its details, with its fruitful distinctions of common and efficacious grace, of noëtic, aisthetic and thelematic effects, a gift, we venture to think, so great, so pregnant with benefit to the Church as fairly to give him a place by the side of Augustine and Anselm and Luther, as the Theologian of the Holy Spirit, as they were respectively the Theologian of Grace, of the Atonement, and of Justification" (*Op. cit.*, p. 21).

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[4] The translation I am using for reference is that of John Allen, 4th American ed. (Philadelphia, 1936).

[5] *Institutes,* Bk. III, Ch. 19, "On Christian Liberty"; Bk. II, Ch. 2.

[6] B. B. Warfield, *Calvin and Calvinism* (New York, 1931), p. 10.

Although this judgment is true, yet one does not need to deny that Calvin derived most of his theology from Luther by way of Bucer, and that this was nothing short of a revived Augustinian doctrine of the grace of God. Although Calvin is critical of Augustine's prolixity, he quotes him with approval oftener than all the other Church Fathers together. But Calvin went beyond the other Reformers in his unqualified adherence to the Word, in the clarity and incisiveness of his thought, in his practical applications to the whole of life and the fervor and warmth of his admonitions. He has well been called the theologian of the heart (Warfield, *Op. cit.*, p. 23).

This great reverence of Calvin for the Word of God as the final, inspired and infallible authority for thought and action, comes to expression in his sermons, commentaries and controversial writings. One striking illustration from the *Institutes* can be cited to illustrate that Calvin does not teach predestination because of the demands of a logical system of thought. For Calvin maintains that it is the simple teaching of Scripture. And no one has yet appeared to prove Calvin wrong there.

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[7] Doumergue, *op. cit.*, p. 31, where he reproduces the judgment of Max Weber in "Die protestantische Ethik und der Geist des Kapitalismus," *Archiv für sozial Wissenschaft und sozial Politik,* Vol. XX, (1904), and Vol. XXI, (1905).

Calvin replies to those who would bury all mention of predestination that "the Scripture is the school of the Holy Spirit, in which, as nothing necessary and useful to be known is omitted, so nothing is taught which it is not beneficial to know. Whatever, therefore, is declared in the Scripture concerning predestination, we must be cautious not to withhold from believers, lest we appear either to defraud them of the favor of God, or to reprove and censure the Holy Spirit for publishing what it would be useful by any means to suppress. Let us, I say, permit the Christian man to open his heart and ears to all the discourses addressed to him by God, only with this moderation that as soon as the Lord closes his sacred mouth, he shall also desist from further inquiry. This will be the best barrier of sobriety, if in learning we not only follow the leading of God, but as soon as he ceases to teach, we give up our desire of learning" (III, 21, 3). This quotation at once gives the lie to the contention that Calvin was a speculative theologian and proves his deep concern to listen to the voice of God speaking in the Scriptures.

The same thought is powerfully expressed by Calvin in warning the overly curious, who would leave none of the "Divine secrets unscrutinized or unexplored." These he admonishes not to exceed the limits of the Word, lest by human curiosity they should enter into a forbidden labyrinth, from which it is impossible to escape. "Nor let us be ashamed to be ignorant of some things relative to a subject in which there is a kind of learned ignorance" (*Ibid.,* III, 21, 2).

However, the dangers involved and the fears of the over-cautious may not cause us "to wish predestination to be buried in silence, lest feeble minds should be disturbed" for, "with what pretext, I ask, will they gloss over their arrogance, which indirectly charges God with foolish inadvertency, as though he foresaw not the danger which they suppose they have had the penetration to discover" (*Ibid.,* III, 21, 4).

It was in submission to the sacred Scripture that Calvin taught the righteous will of God to be the cause of all things that come to pass. And even though our finite minds at times are troubled by the fact of reprobation, it would constitute extreme presumption on the part of the creature to inquire into the causes of the divine will, which is the highest rule of justice. Calvin's God is not lawless *(ex lex)* and we may not ascribe to him caprice, for he is a law unto himself. And to suppose that there exists anything antecedent to the divine will is clearly impious, for that involves a denial of the perfection and infinity of God (cf. *Inst.* III, 23, 2).

Because Calvin had such a profound sense of God in his majesty and surrendered himself unreservedly to live before the face of God, he may truly be called a God-intoxicated man. For with Calvin the doctrine of predestination never stood alone, but alongside of it he stressed human responsibility in all his preaching. He believed firmly that a man's faith becomes evident in his works. Calvin rejoiced in the blessed assurance that God had predestinated him personally, and this knowledge made him eager to do the will of God.

Calvin was sure that God had called him to the task of reforming the church in those darksome days. His first response to that call was to dedicate his formidable learning and prodigious pen to the work. Later he saw clearly that God wanted him in Geneva, although his spirit longed for solitude and rest. After his return from exile in Strasbourg, where his soul was filled with consternation at the prospect of taking up the yoke, which was his cross, he acquiesced in the judgment of his friends and concluded, "God wills it!"[8] Like David of old Calvin could say, "I have set Jehovah always before me: Because he is at my right hand, I shall not be moved" (Ps. 16:8) and, "Jehovah is my light and my salvation; Whom shall I fear" (Ps. 27:1). As a result Calvin was able to overcome all opposition as God's representative. What could opposition, tumult, revolution do to such a man! No doubt this accounts for the fact that he, like Paul and Silas before him, was able to turn the world upside down (Acts 17:6). This was the secret of his success and the motivation for his indefatigable energy. He was assured in his soul that he was doing the work of the Lord in Geneva.

Calvin was never a narrow, nationalistic, sectarian Reformer; he believed that we must draw all men to God in order that all may worship God and serve him. To this end he sent out two Protestant missionaries in 1556 to Brazil, with a group of colonists. Neither did Calvin restrict his spiritual ministrations to the Genevese and the French, but the whole world was his parish. When his enemies mocked Calvin and threw the death of his son in his face, Calvin responded, "Children, I have them over the whole earth, myriads of them." In 1552 Calvin wrote a letter to Cranmer in England in which he said, "As far as I am concerned, if I can be of any service I shall not shrink from crossing ten seas, if need be, for that object. If the rendering of a helping hand to the kingdom of England were the only point at issue, that of itself would be a sufficient motive for me. But now, when the object sought after is an agreement of learned men, gravely considered and well framed according to the standard of Scriptures, by which churches that would otherwise be far separated from each other may be made to unite; I do not consider it right for me to shrink from any labors or difficulties."[9]

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[8] Doumergue, *Calvijn als Mensch en Hervormer,* Trans. Helena C. Pos, (Amsterdam, 1931), pp. 10-15.

This is but one of the most striking examples of his ecumenical spirit, but there are many evidences that Calvin abominated schisms.[10] Calvin also labored with zeal for the unity of the Swiss churches and worked out the *Consensus Tigurinus* (1549) with Bullinger, whereby he avoided a split into Zwinglian and Calvinistic segments of the Swiss Reformation.

But Calvin went further than that. He sought nothing short of the unification of all evangelical churches of Protestantism. Calvin's letters give us a rich insight into this zealous striving for unity. He calls on Melanchthon and Bullinger to restrain Luther's passionate propaganda concerning the Lord's Supper, and he patiently bore all the bitter opposition he experienced from Luther's side. He rejoiced as a child to receive a greeting from Luther and said, "Even if he should revile me and call me a devil nevertheless I would consider him one of the outstanding servants of God." Calvin wrote a letter to Luther asking for a conference, but Melanchthon did not have the nerve to deliver it. After the death of Luther (1546), Calvin continued his efforts for unity with Bucer and Melanchthon, but nothing came of it.[11] But there is one thing we must beware of, confounding Calvin's zeal for the unity of the church with the modernistic ecumenicalism, which is not based on the Word. It would be difficult to imagine Calvin, as McNeill pictures him, having a leading role in the ecumenical revival of our day.[12] For Calvin the unity of the church was a question of obedience to the truth, but he did not want a super-church that was doctrinally divided (*Inst.* IV, 182). With this reference to his personal faith and ecclesiastical activity, our remarks on Calvin as theologian of the Word must be concluded. The proof of his theology is to be found in his life. Calvin was a fanatic for Christ, but his was a well-directed, concentrated enthusiasm in which he was consumed for God's sake. It was his doctrine and deathless example which put courage into the hearts of the Huguenots and steeled their nerves to the death. It was he who inspired Knox in his resistance to tyranny and his struggle to gain Scotland for the Reformation. And it was Calvin's theology and example that produced a Calvinistic culture in Holland, England, Scotland, and even to some extent in America, for our Pilgrim and

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[9] "Original Letters" (1537-1558, II., p. 713), quoted in *Life Pictures of John Calvin; For Young and Old,* James Good, and W. Richards, (Philadelphia, 1909), p. 32.

[10] W. Stanford Reid, "Ecumenicalism of Calvin," *Westminster Theological Journal,* XI, 1 (Nov. 1948).

[11] H. Koffijberg, *De Internationale Strekking van het Calvinisme,* (Amsterdam, 1916), pp. 15-21.

[12] John T. McNeill, *The History and Character of Calvinism,* (New York, 1954), p. 234.

Puritan fathers were inspired with a sense of mission and vocation, which they had inherited from the Calvinistic tradition.

Calvin's Political Impact

The Reformation, in its essence, was not a matter of the periphery, but of the heart, out of which are the issues of life. It addressed itself to the question of man's relationship to God, which is determinative for all other relationships of life. In this sense it was catholic and universal in its impact upon the whole life of society. Although the restitution of the true church was the primary goal, the divine glory of God's work in Christ shed its light abroad into every sphere of life.

The impact of Calvin's ideas in the political sphere inaugurated a new era, giving a new character and direction to national existence in many lands. The Greek state had been totalitarian, in which religion served as means unto the end, namely, the glorification of the state. In the Middle Ages the roles were reversed so that we find a church-state, with supreme authority vested in the pope, who loaned temporal power to the earthly ruler for the service of the church. Calvin saw the church and the state as two interdependent entities each having received its own authority from the sovereign God. In this conception the state is never secular, nor are state and church separated in the modern sense of the word. Atheistic democracy and popular sovereignty cannot claim Calvin as their father.

According to Calvin, church and state must live in peace and must cooperate together in subjection to the Word of God. Each is to have its own jurisdiction. The state has authority in purely civil and temporal matters; the church, in spiritual matters. Calvin abolished the *benefit of the clergy* clause of canon law, placing himself and his ministerial associates in obedience to the magistrates in all civil matters. The magistrates, on their part, were to be under the jurisdiction of the consistory in things spiritual. It is clear from this that Calvin thought of the state as being constituted of Christian citizens, for, just as there could be no true, prosperous individual life without morality based upon the true religion, so too, Calvin maintained, social and political life without true morality, which in turn is based upon true religion, namely, the Christian, is impossible.

According to the medieval church, the state was its servant. The Anabaptists considered the state to be the servant of Satan. But Calvin maintained that the state is the servant of God, since civil polity makes life among men possible by restraining the wicked so that they cannot perpetrate their crimes with impunity. Hence the service of the state is holy, to be exercised in the name of God and unto his glory. The magistrates are the representatives of God; their calling is not only legitimate "but by far the most sacred and honorable in human life" (*Inst.,* IV, 20, 1), and we owe them obedience for conscience sake. Thus all of life, for Calvin, is delivered from the ban of profane inferiority. The spiritual liberty of the Christian does not abolish tribunals, laws, governors and is perfectly consonate with civil servitude (*Ibid.,* IV, 20, 1).

Rulers have no right to make laws respecting the worship of God and religion; nevertheless, their duty extends to both tables of the law. This is clear from the Scriptures and the practice of the pagans, among whom the philosophers made religion their first care. Hence it would be preposterous for Christian magistrates to neglect the claims of God for the interests of men (*Ibid.,* IV, 20, 9). Calvin would have the government maintain public forms of religion among Christians and humanity among men. Civil authorities, being themselves Christian, must guard the true religion contained in the law of God from being violated and polluted by public blasphemy (*Ibid.,* IV, 20, 3).

In his ideas about the political order, Calvin's basic principle of the sovereignty of God is determinative. For he was strongly opposed to every form of state absolutism, autocracy, and absolute monarchy. Kings and presidents ought to have their power limited by legislators and constitutional law. Calvin cites the concrete case from Scripture of Samuel recording the rights of the people in a book for future reference between them and the king. This differs *in toto* from the social contract idea of Rousseau, in which the collective will of the people is the highest norm. For Calvin the sovereign God is law-giver of the nations today as well as in the days of Samuel, and popular sovereignty is a figment of the deluded imagination of fallen man.

The state is also elective in the sense that the approbation of the people is required for lawful authority. Calvin points to the example of David, who did not assume his prerogative of ruling either at Hebron or at Jerusalem, although God had chosen him to the sacred office, until the elders of the people came down and requested him to rule over them. Voting, for Calvin, is a serious and sacred business by which magistrates are chosen popularly in order to curb the tyranny of kings. This is not merely their right by virtue of their office, but also their sacred duty. Thus hereditary rule is eliminated. Private citizens may, indeed, refuse obedience to the ruler when he commands anything contrary to the Word of God, for we must obey God rather than man. But a citizen who has no office may not rebel or rise up against lawfully constituted authority.

To the government the citizen owes honor, obedience, military and other service, payment of taxes, and prayers for the well-being of the rulers. And whereas unjust rulers are raised up by God to punish the iniquities of the people, they must be obeyed. The only recourse in such cases is to prayer, for God judgeth among the nations and he will requite those who take away the right of the widow and the poor (*Ibid.,* IV, 20, 17-32). Here the full impact of the idea of God's sovereignty is again in evidence. Not only is the ruler under restriction, but also the citizen, who is constrained to do his duty and to fulfill his divine obligation, for God's sake. It is true that in the end Calvin does grant that God also raises up individuals to make an end to tyranny, or he may send other rulers to overcome tyrants, but a special call from the Lord is involved. The normal procedure is that the lower magistrates (i.e., those representing the people and elected by popular vote) should remove rulers who tyrannize their people and violate the constitution. This has been called by Calvinistic scholars, "the holy right of rebellion."[13]

Albert Hyma claims that it was especially the transfer of the elective system used in choosing elders and deacons in the Genevan church to the political arena that made such a tremendous impact wherever Calvinism went (Dutch Republic, England and Scotland, and America).[14] The late Williston Walker of Yale University wrote, "The influence of Calvinism, for more than a century after the death of the Genevan Reformer, was the most potent force in Europe in the development of civil liberty. What the modern world owes to it is almost incalculable."[15] A recent English author, in telling the story of what Calvinism's achievement in America is, says, "We have seen it modifying the constitutions and life-forms of old established countries in Switzerland, Holland, and Great Britain, but here we have it operating as a chief factor in creating a new state. The influence of the United States in the world today makes its origins a matter of great interest. Those origins reveal one of the most special triumphs of Calvinism."[16] This is also emphasized by Mr. Davies (cf. footnote 14) who contends that the state of mind of the American colonist had been formed before the influence of Locke came to expression on our side of the water through Jefferson, while Dakin

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13. However, cf. A. A. Van Schelven, *Het Heilig Recht Van Opstand,* (Kampen, cf. 1919), who argues that the historical situation has so changed that constitutional monarchs have no chance to tyrannize and the division between ruler and lower magistrate no longer obtains. This little tract is very valuable, however, for locating the sources in a long history of a much debated question.

14. *The Life of John Calvin,* (Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1943). Cf. ch. "Road to Democracy," pp. 92-102; See also A. Mervyn Davies, *Foundation of American Freedom,* (New York, 1955), who holds that, "By defeating the rising tide of absolutism when it threatened to engulf all Europe, it (i.e., Calvinism,) made possible the emergence of a commonwealth of man under the sovereignty of God. Thus it was that it laid the foundations of our freedom," p. 24.

15. Quoted by Hyma without ref. *op. cit.,* pp. 96, 97.

16. A Dakin, *Calvinism* (Philadelphia, 1946), p. 162.

estimates that about two of the three million inhabitants of America at the time of the Revolutionary war were of Calvinistic stock.[17]

It is questionable whether anyone would contend that Calvin spoke the liberating word, or the last word, on the relation of church and state. For example, he believed that the state ought to provide for the physical necessities of the ministers, that it was required to care for the poor and the education of young citizens. Even though we grant that Calvin envisaged a Christian government, nevertheless he placed a sharp weapon into the hands of the government, whereby it becomes quite simple for a hostile government to force the church to do its bidding.

Furthermore, we may well question the position of Hyma (Doumergue also is of this opinion) that a democratic church gave rise to a democratic state. Actually, the church that Calvin organized was not democratic in this modern sense, for the ultimate power and authority was vested in the elders, as delegated to them by Christ.

Nevertheless, although the separation of church and state was not actualized in Geneva during Calvin's lifetime, we may say it became a historic reality due to his labors in instituting spiritual discipline in the church. The struggle for the spiritual jurisdiction of the consistory, with the right of excommunication, was the focal point of dispute in the long, hard, and sometimes bitter struggle that Calvin waged with the Genevan council. This, says Warfield, was the entering wedge, "driven in between Church and State which was bound to separate the one from the other" (*Op. cit.,* p. 18). And although all of Calvin's spiritual children did not appreciate this sufficiently, he wanted a church autonomous in its own, its spiritual sphere. It is because of this victory, namely, the successful introduction and maintenance of spiritual discipline, says Warfield, that "every Church in Protestant Christendom which enjoys today any liberty whatever, in performing its functions as a Church of Jesus Christ, owes it all to John Calvin" (*Ibid.,* p. 19).

Calvin's Impact on Culture

This judgment of Warfield is confirmed by the fact that Calvin also liberated the whole realm of culture from the tutelage of the church. Calvin rejected the nature and grace scheme of Aquinas, in which the world is divided into an upper and lower half, given respectively to the domination of faith and reason. On this view grace includes religion, ethics, theology, and the church; but nature is the realm of culture, including all the natural activities of man. Realizing the inadequacy of the lower realm in and by itself, Aquinas and the church after him place the whole sphere of culture under the tutelage of the church, and it becomes the handmaid to theology.

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[17] *Op. cit.,* p. 159 where Dakin accepts the estimate of L. S. Mudge, *Enc. Britt.* Ed. XIV, Vol. XVIII, p. 447.

William of Occam, the nominalist philosopher, in opposing this overlordship, sets the two realms over against each other antithetically. He, indeed, would deliver art and agriculture, commerce and trade from the power of the pope, but he turns it over to the dukes and kings. Thus he became the father of a state-controlled culture, the first modern philosopher of totalitarianism.

Now Calvin proclaimed alongside of church and state a third realm, an area of life that has separate existence and jurisdiction. It is called the sphere of the *adiaphora,* the things indifferent. This is the court of conscience. No pope or king may here hold sway.

This area is not restricted to a few insignificant matters of taste and opinion among individuals, but it includes music, architecture, technical learning, science, social festivities, and the everyday question, "what shall we eat and what shall we drink and where-withal shall we be clothed?" Now Calvin proclaims freedom from both church and state for this whole large area of life in his doctrine of Christian liberty, making man responsible and accountable to God alone in his conscience. This doctrine of Christian liberty is therefore one of the foundation stones of Calvin's cultural philosophy.

Christian Liberty as the Basis of Christian Vocation

The doctrine of Christian Liberty (*Inst.* III, 19) forms the appendix to justification, and without it there cannot be the "right knowledge of Christ, or of evangelical truth, or of internal peace of mind." But when this doctrine is mentioned there are two violent reactions: some, "under the pretext of liberty, cast off all obedience to God, and precipitate themselves into the most unbridled licentiousness; and some despise it, supposing it to be subversive of all moderation, order and moral distinctions" (par. 1). These are the reactions of the worldling and the ascetic. Calvin is equally opposed to these two evils, worldliness and world-flight. This, however, does not make him a middle-of-the-roader in the sense of one who wants his cake while he eats it. Calvin did not straddle issues, but his balance is scriptural, and he goes as far as the Word goes.

In its essence, of course, Christian liberty is spiritual. It consists of freedom from the bondage of the law and restoration to voluntary obedience to the will of God. Since we are free from the law as an instrument unto salvation, we respond as children to the service of God with joy and alacrity. Liberty is enjoyed in the way of faith and it ought to animate us to virtue, but slavish minds, who would use it to fulfill the lusts of the flesh, have no part in it.

Since Paul makes all external things subject to our liberty (Rom. 14:14), there is nothing unclean in itself, provided we use our freedom before God and not before men. God's good gifts are abused if they are too ardently coveted, too proudly boasted, and too luxuriously lavished. However, unto the pure all things are pure, but all that is not out of faith is sin, and "unto them that are defiled and unbelieving is nothing pure: but even their mind and conscience is defiled" (Titus 1:15).

The Christian, who is God's freeman, uses this world in faith, that is, in obedience to the commandments of God unto his glory. He must observe moderation lest he abuse God's good gifts; he must be patient and submissive when deprived of earthly blessings. He is called to exercise love and forbearance in the use of his liberty, so that his neighbor may be edified. But since the things of this world are not sinful in themselves he may possess them, but must guard against being possessed in the process. The pursuit of cultural achievement and the attainment of wealth are not evil in themselves; the enjoyment of food, drink and luxury are not to be despised or condemned, but God's curses fall upon the rich because they are immersed in sensual delights and their hearts are inebriated with present pleasures while perpetually grasping for new ones (*Inst.* III, 19, 9 & III, 6-10). In his meditation upon the future life Calvin says we must learn to despise this present world because it draws us away from our calling. In that sense the things good in themselves become evil to us; hence we must learn to look upon all things in the light of eternity.

Here is the crux of the matter. This is the decisive issue! For Calvin one's cultural striving is good or bad, depending upon one's faith. All that is not out of faith is sin. All apostate culture is self-seeking in which man saves himself by his works and exalts his own glory. But the doctrine of justification by faith with its appendix of Christian liberty sets man free to serve God in his cultural calling. Abraham Kuyper, in his *Stone Lectures,* signalizes this point when he reminds us that it was this liberation of the medieval man from the burden of gaining salvation by works that set free the energy and interest which produced our modern world of science, industry, and invention. For, by Calvin's emphasis on the proper use of this world, the gaze of the believer was directed to this beautiful cosmos in which God calls us to be his cultural agents, and to have dominion over the earth, to replenish it, and to cultivate the ground.[18]

And whereas Augustine had said that "labor, though useful, is itself a punishment" (*De civ. Dei,* XXII, 22), Calvin maintains that every man's vocation is laid on him of God, from which a peculiar consolation is derived, namely, that "there will be no employment so mean and sordid as not to appear truly respectable, and be deemed highly important in the sight of God" (*Inst.* III, 10, 6). With this in mind, let us now consider some of Calvin's contributions in the field of economics.

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[18] *Calvinism: Six Stone Foundation Lectures,* (Grand Rapids, 1943), pp. 117-30.

Calvin and the World of Economics

The satisfaction of the physical necessities and the advancement of the material welfare of man, both as individual and society, is called the science of economy. Calvin has much to say in all of his commentaries on this broad subject, while his sermons are also replete with references to man's physical needs. The striking thing about Calvin's preaching is its existential character. It is addressed to the concrete situation. Calvin, for example, does not only condemn beggary, but he also urges believers to treat servants kindly and lovingly (*Sermons,* Deut. 15:11-12; 26:16).[19]

Three matters call for our attention if we would take the measure of the economic impact of Calvin, namely, the question of rent, the concept of calling, and the idea of communism.

The prohibition against taking rent was one of the most important factors in the economic life of the middle ages (*Op. cit.,* pp. 30, 31). This prohibition was substantiated by Scripture (Luke 6:35; Deut. 23:19; Ps. 15, etc.) and Aristotle, whose dictum that money is sterile was repeated automatically and universally. Even in the sixteenth century this was the *communis opinio,* from which neither Reformers nor Humanists deviated.

However, Calvin became the exception to the rule. Although he fully realized the dangers of usury and economic lawlessness, to forbid interest under all circumstances is to bind the conscience beyond the Word. This was the main issue! The authority of the Word and Christian freedom! The Scholastics ruled that usury was a mortal sin, and this included interest of all kinds. Here the issue was joined. Calvin takes the various texts adduced and shows that they have been misunderstood.

Consider Luke 6:35, the *locus classicus,* of the scholastic theologians. Here the Word directs us to feed the poor and to treat them with consideration and love. However, to apply the civil laws of the Jews (cf. Deut. 23:19) to New Testament believers is not valid, says Calvin. An appeal to the fraternal connection as it existed between Jews and now exists between Christians, is not normative for business transactions.[20] It is upon pronouncements such as these that A. Kuyper and his followers have based their doctrine of sphere sovereignty. There is a distinction between the norms of the moral and the economic realm, just as there are norms for the juridical and the analytical modalities of life. With respect to the other adduced scriptural proofs from the Psalms and the Prophets, Calvin simply rules them irrelevant since they protest the sin of usury, which Calvin himself also abominated. The conclusion of the matter is that the Bible contains no prohibition against the taking of interest on money for business ventures (Cf. *Harmony of the Gospel,* Matt. 8:42).

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[19] P. A. Diepenhorst, *Calvijn en de Economie,* (Wageningen, 1904). What follows in the text is an extract of this Dissertation by Dr. Diepenhorst, who has consulted the works of Calvin in *Corpus Reformatorum.* Apart from the references in sermons and commentaries Calvin's theory on interest is set forth in his *Consilium.*

[20] Cf. "On the Similarity and Differences Between the Two Testaments," *Inst.* Bk. II, chs. 10, 11.

What is even more significant is the fact that Calvin maintains the productivity of money. He laughs at Aristotle's idea that money is unproductive and points to its productive power in industry. But to the poor we must lend without return (*Comms.* on Ex. 22:25; Lev. 25:25-28; Deut. 23:19, 20). In short, Calvin distinguishes between Christian charity and business, which opened the door for great ventures in trade and industry. For this Calvin has received his mead of praise from many economists.[21] Max Weber, followed by R. H. Tawney, credits him for having given impetus to the rise of capitalism.[22] There is no reason to deny or depreciate this connection as long as we remember what was meant by the spirit of capitalism and we do not hold Calvin, with his high ethical sense and his cautions against the abuse of liberty, responsible for the excesses of the rugged individualism of the nineteenth century. For, as Doumergue reminds us, although Calvin glorified the individual, it was always in relation to God and the community of the saints. Nothing was more social than the Calvinistic community. Although Calvin was a great individualist in the sense of appreciating and developing personality, no one spoke less of self and did more for the community, church, and state than he.[23] Furthermore, Weber uses the Puritan writers as his sources, but their idea of gaining assurance of salvation by good works is not found in Calvin himself. And the ministers of Geneva unequivocally opposed the proposition of the merchants in 1580 to establish a bank, on the ground that Geneva would be stronger if she remained poor.

Secondly, let us consider the Calvinistic concept of calling and of trade in particular. Traders, during the Middle Ages, were considered a sterile class, whereas agriculture was praised to the skies. Calvin does not over-estimate the one at the expense of the other (Cf. *Comms.* on Hos. 12:8; Gen. 47:19-23; John 2:16b; Isa. 23:2). Trade, says Calvin, did not bring Tyre low, but excessive delight in worldly things. Babylon was not condemned for the prosperity and luxury brought on by trade, but for haughtiness and pride (*Comm.* on Isa. 47).

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[21] Diepenhorst, *op. cit.,* pp. 139, 153-71.

[22] *Protestant Ethics and the Spirit of Capitalism* (New York, 1931) 2 vols. *Religion and the Rise of Capitalism,* Holland Memorial Lectures, 1922, (Penguin Books, Inc. New York).

[23] *Calvijn Als Mensch En Hervormer,* pp. 122-25.

Undoubtedly Calvin's ideas about rent were reflected in his evaluation of the merchant, but it was especially his strong sense that every calling is honorable before God which lies at the foundation of this appreciation. Ever since the early church had glorified martyrdom and set its sights on heaven, work had been depreciated as of a lower, earthly nature. As we have seen, Augustine warned against the evils of idleness and prescribed work for monks, but only as a necessary evil, since work was punishment. Calvin, on the other hand, saw monasticism as an evil that led to pride, envy, strife. It was producing laziness, profligacy, and an unhealthy dualism between saintliness, acquired by world-flight, and the conditions of the laity as encased in earthiness and concupiscence. The sacrament of orders glorified this dualism, with some choosing the high road of renunciation of the flesh and of the world, while others kept plodding along the low road of marriage and earthly occupation. A dual morality developed, one for monks *(vita angelica et panes angelicus),* the other for ordinary sinners, the laity. To this Calvin took indignant and vehement exception (*Inst.* IV, 13). Whereas Thomas a' Kempis had glorified this dualism in his *Imitation of Christ,* Calvin came along and demolished it. Thomas had some very morbid ideas about culture, despising philosophy, learning and art. For him all mental and sensual pleasure was dangerous because it jeopardized spiritual joy. His saintliness comes to expression in withdrawing with a book into a lonely nook *(cum libello in angello).*[24]

Calvin rejected all monkish vows, since they are based upon the assumption that there is a more perfect rule of life than that which God has given to the church as a whole (*Op. cit.,* IV, 10). The Roman hierarchy, said he, makes an unnatural separation between the heavenly and the earthly, but God requires perfection of all his children, and beyond that we may not set up rules (Cf. *Comm.* on Phil. 3:15; I John 3:12). Therefore, Christian perfection must be sought within, not outside, Christian calling. Calvin does not reject fasting entirely, but points out that it easily degenerates into superstition. This happens when we make it a necessary work unto salvation.

Calvin also lashes out against the papal prohibition against the marriage of priests (*Inst.* IV, 12, 23-28) which results in a polluted celibacy in which fornication rages with impunity. God has left men free, and we may not infringe on their freedom (*Comm.* on I Tim. 3:2; and Titus 1:6). Besides, it is a sign of apostasy and proof that impostors have taken over the church, since Christ compares the sacredness of marriage to the union of himself with the church (*Comm.* II Tim. 4:13). In spite of these attacks on monasticism, many of Calvin's critics have accused him of being an ascetic. He is said to have denied the use of worldly things beyond the need of food and drink. If anyone living still puts stock in such a legend, let him read Calvin's *Commentary* on Amos 6, Calvin's sermons, and especially, the exposition of the proper use of this present life (*Inst.* III, 6-10).

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[24] Henry J. Van Andel, "The Christian and Culture," *The Presbyterian Guardian,* (Jan. 1944), p. 17 ff.

In the latter Calvin discusses duty and beauty, vocation and avocation (he allows room for such recreations as golf and sport in general), the pilgrim's staff and the soldier's armour. Here Calvin gives a defense of culture in its widest sense, extending from agriculture and commerce to the things of beauty and the luxuries of life. Calvin gives a spirited defense of luxury and enunciates certain basic principles, which may still serve to guide us today. Calvin rejected the cruel and inhuman philosophy of the Stoics, which scorned the ordinary sensuous and mental pleasures of life. For him sin did not reside in matter, but has its seat in the heart. Evil is not in the world of color, of sound, of food and drink and clothing, but it consists of abusing the good gifts of God in excess, in rioting and drunkenness, revelling and debauchery. Holiness is not achieved by avoiding certain physical functions and rejecting the good gifts of God, but by accepting them in faith and using them for his glory and the edification of the church (Cf. *Sermons* on Deut. 11:15; 12:15; 22:5; also cf. *Comm.* on I Sam. 25:36-43; Amos 6:4; James 5:5; Isa. 3:16; and much more to the same effect in the *Inst.* III, 19, 9, 10; III, 10). In the use of clothing, Calvin reminds us that we must keep in mind the purpose for which it was given and warns us against extravagance and excessive changes in style, strutting and showing off. Here too, simplicity and moderation are the key to the right use of God's gifts, which we may not pass by unused, lest we be guilty of ingratitude.

In fairness to the critics, it ought to be added that they accord Calvinism a much higher social influence than Lutheranism. Troeltsch characterizes Calvinistic asceticism as "active, aggressive; it would transform the world to the honor of God.... In order to achieve this end, it rationalizes and disciplines all life by its ethical theories and by its ecclesiastical disciplines.... In mere feeling (*Gefühligkeit und Stimmung*) it sees only inertness and lack of seriousness; it is filled with a fundamental sentiment: labor for God, for the honor of the Church! Thus the Calvinistic ethic produces a lively activity, a severe discipline, a complete plan, a social-Christian aim."[25] This asceticism, it is granted, is a kind of inner-worldly *(inner-weltliche askese)* one, geared to operate within society. But this is to play with words and historical meanings, and one could make anything over into its opposite by this method. For this Calvinistic asceticism, according to its authors, does not cause one to flee from this world, but to participate in it with eagerness and to acquire its goods with zest to the glory of God. One may well ask with Doumergue if the substantive is not thus swallowed up by the adjective. To speak of Calvinistic asceticism is ridiculous. And Calvin would have said, "Let us discard, therefore, that inhuman philosophy which, allowing no use of the creatures but what is absolutely necessary, not only malignantly deprives us of the lawful enjoyment of the Divine beneficence, but which cannot be embraced till it has despoiled man of all his senses, and reduced him to a senseless block" (*Inst.* III, 10, 3).

Finally, a word is in order with respect to Calvin's attitude concerning communism. Naturally we may not read into the term all of the nineteenth century development by the theoretic socialists and communists. In Calvin's day we find a community of goods advocated by some of the Anabaptists and the Libertines. The former denied common grace and the final authority of the Word. The Libertines were a pantheistic sect, not to be identified with Calvin's political enemies in Geneva, however. They lived in utter license, repudiating the Word and living according to the inclination of the old Adam, which was made into a divine calling. Under the name of "spiritual marriage" they introduced a *"pollution brutalle"* and community of goods accompanied this degeneration of morals.

Calvin did not take up the question of community goods in his tract against the Anabaptists, since all of them did not subscribe to it; but in 1545 he wrote a tract against the Libertines in which he gave a scriptural refutation of this practice.[26] He begins by pointing out the relation of this error to the "brutal passion" of sharing wives and denounces the pursuit of riches in which men have no concern for their fellow-men. Presently he presents the positive biblical teaching with respect to earthly goods under three heads.

First, we may not reach out for riches with too great a passion but ought to be satisfied with a little, always ready to relinquish what we have. Second, we must labor honestly to gain our needful bread and lay aside all evil practices. Finally, he that hath little must not neglect to thank God and eat his bread with contentment; and he that has much may not give himself up to intemperance.

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[25] Ernst Troeltsch, *Die Bedeutung des Protestantismus für die Entstehung der modernen Welt,* (1906), p. 27, as quoted by E. Doumergue, *Calvin and the Reformation,* pp. 16, 17.

[26] Cf. Diepenhorst, *op. cit.,* pp. 250-306.

Next, Calvin interprets the Bible texts to which the communists of his day appealed. In the case of the rich young ruler (Matt. 19:21), we may not conclude from a particular case to a universal principle. Since the young man boasted that he had kept all the commandments, the Lord exposes his hypocrisy by this acid test of his love. It simply teaches us that we must ever be ready to give up all for Christ. Especially in the case of the disciples who had all things common (Acts 4:32), Calvin shows that this is not a recommendation of communism. The sense of the text is not that all the believers in Jerusalem disposed of their goods, which simply was not true, but simply that in the brotherly love which animated them they did not tolerate that any one should suffer want.

This general condemnation of communistic tendencies of his day is not isolated and restricted to the tract under discussion, but one can find the same sentiments expressed in the commentaries dealing with these passages of Scripture (Matt. 19:20; Acts 4:23). In a sermon (Luke 3:11) Calvin holds that John the Baptist did not condemn personal property but exhorted men to give out of their abundance to those who are in need, since God is the absolute owner, and we are but stewards of our possessions. Calvin himself gave a worthy example by spending all his salary, beyond his own necessity, for the poor and the entertainment of strangers. Money meant nothing to him, to the chagrin of his enemies. He refused to accept a raise in salary when it was offered by the council but remonstrated with them about the low salaries of his fellow-preachers, some of whom had young children.

To conclude these remarks on Calvin's cultural influence in the field of economics, it should be observed that Calvin was deeply interested in social justice. It has been suggested that he introduced socialism in Geneva, since "He lent the acumen of his mind and legal training to a codification of the city's laws, and to the best adjustment of its taxes. . . . The city's health was the better for his aid in construction of sewers and the erection of hospitals. He concerned himself with the methods of heating and protection against fires; through him the weaving industry was revived."[27] Doumergue adds, "by rehabilitating handwork and by prescribing education for all, Calvin to a great extent erases the class distinctions in society" (*Ibid.,* p. 142). However, although we may grant that Calvin was not opposed to social legislation, it would be an abuse of words to speak of his efforts to stimulate private enterprise and initiative as socialism. Calvin was not a collectivist in any sense of the word.

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[27] Henry Osborn Taylor, *Thought and Expression in the Sixteenth Century,* (New York, 1920), I, pp. 423, 424.

Calvin's Aesthetic Principles

"In nothing, perhaps, has Calvin been more misjudged than in the view that he lacked any aesthetic sense. Such a statement should not be made of so good a writer as he. Critics of different religious preferences have joined in admiration of his style, both in Latin and in French. While his thoughts flow, the words in which he clothes them are chosen and sifted with a trained sense of artistic fitness. We see in his writing both a scriptural simplicity and a Ciceronian eloquence. He boasts unduly of his 'rudeness' and 'brevity': these are not practiced at the expense of elegance, nor do they prevent the effective use of imagery.... He likes to praise an apt expression, using words such as 'beautiful,' 'elegant,' 'splendid' ... references to Latin and Greek poets are fairly abundant in his works, and he loves the Psalms as poetry.... There are in Calvin's works numerous passages of striking beauty in appreciation of the forms of nature."[28]

This rather recent estimate by an American professor of history is a far cry from the concensus of Jesuits, Voltarians, and Protestants in Doumergue's day. To them Calvin appeared as the personification of everything that was anti-liberal, anti-artistic and anti-human.[29] It was especially through the researches of men as Doumergue, and, more recently Prof. Leon Wencelius of Swarthmore College, that these prejudicial portrayals have been proved false.[30] The latter has the distinction of having produced the most thorough study to date of Calvin's aesthetic principles.[31] These principles have been critically applied to contemporary Calvinistic literature in the Netherlands by C. Rijnsdorp,[32] who makes extensive use of Wencelius.

To appreciate Calvin's doctrine concerning the beautiful, we must remember that he was not a fanatic slave of the letter, the servant of a paper-god, called *The Bible*. But Calvin had seen the living God and he walked before his face in childlike fear. Calvin's ideas about music and sculpture, language and form are always determined by a trembling consciousness of the fact that we have to do with him that sitteth above the circle of the earth (Isa. 10:22), glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders (Ex. 15:11).

For Calvin beauty is nothing more than the shining forth of the majesty and glory of this God. Therefore, to divorce beauty from

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[28] John T. McNeill, *op. cit.*, pp. 231, 232.

[29] Doumergue, *Kunst en Genoel in het Werk van Calvijn,* 3 lectures, Trans. D. F. A. Winckel, (Wageningen, 1904), p. 9.

[30] and [31]. *l'Esthetique de Calvin,* (Raspail, 1937) I must confess that I have not been able to work through this 500 page study on Calvin's Aesthetics in its original but have read A. Anema's reproduction in Dutch, and Wencelius's lecture on "The Word of God and Culture" in which he treats Calvin's ideas on art.

[32] *In Drie Ecappen* (Baarn, 1951), p. 17-34. I have appropriated the materials here given from Wencelius, since Rijnsdorp has also produced a boiled down concept of Calvin's aesthetic principles through the eyes of Wencelius.

God is idolatry. This was the actual result of the fall of man, whereby creation lost its ethical contact with God; that is, man no longer loves and knows God but has been alienated from the Father's heart. In this miserable state man is blind and has lost the sense of proper order and measure and finds only apparent beauty *(beauté apparente).* Simply to behold the beauty in this world does not bring us into a personal relationship with God, although beauty is still the first guide to God. For beauty reveals his attributes of goodness, wisdom, omnipotence, righteousness, and his providential care. Therefore, unbelievers are without excuse, since this beauty of God is universally displayed.

Calvin thinks of the history of man on earth as a cosmic drama, of which God is at the same time author and spectator. Beauty is the divine lustre of glory reflected from the thought and work of God. It always consists of clarity, measure, and perfection.

There are three acts in this drama: before the fall, in the perfect harmony of heaven and paradise; between the fall and redemption, in which beauty is symbolic – witness the temple of Solomon – and the preparation for and expectation of the Messiah is the central theme; finally, in the third period, the glory of the Lord becomes flesh in the Son. And although he had no form nor comeliness, with no beauty that we should desire him (Isa. 53:2), yet there shone forth in him a spiritual beauty so that "he that hath seen me hath seen the Father" (John 14:9), and "we beheld his glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father" (John 1:14).

Calvin maintains that we must be co-workers and co-spectators with God of this drama. To become inattentive during the play, which has our eternal goal at stake, would be gross neglect on our part. At the center of this cosmic drama stands the church, which operates against the background of worldly activity and world history. However, in the common grace of God all men have a calling irrespective of predestination. For all have retained some appreciation for beauty and a limited ability to produce arts. This is due to the beneficence of the creator (*Inst.* II, 2, 15, 16, 17; II, 3).[33]

Now beauty is not an impersonal, self-existent principle, as in Plato, of which the artist becomes a devotee. It is rather the light of an ever-working wisdom and an ever-creating will. The contemplation of beauty, in view of the natural talent of man, lures him on to the production and communication of it in art. This fulfills God's purpose as expressed in the creation of man in his image, which has not been destroyed by sin. However, sin has changed man's allegiance so that he now seeks the creature rather than the creator, in the things created. Man as sinner "Accepts appearance for reality, and even makes of it an absolute which he adores."[34] The sinner seeks a specious beauty, which breeds desire and is accompanied by a false joy and issues into sensuous temptation. This is vanity and an indicative of the emptiness of life without God.

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[33] For a more detailed treatment of the subject of common grace and culture cf. H. Bavinck, "Calvin and Common Grace," *Calvin and the Reformation,* pp. 117-30, where Bavinck maintains that Calvin, in spite of "his conviction of the majesty and spiritual character of the moral law," is more generous in his recognition of what is true and good, wherever it be found, than any other Reformer" p. 120.

However, art is a natural gift, thoroughly and simply human.[35] The artist is the re-creator; he makes his work as God made the universe. As such he stands above his object as possessor of the gift to see the beauty of creation better than his fellow-observers. On the other hand, the artist must stand below his subject, as an observer of the creature of God. He must develop a sense of the object, and fidelity to the object becomes a passion with Calvin. No doubt this can be traced, to some extent, to his Humanistic training, in which return to the sources of learning was a passion. This came to expression in Calvin's study of Scripture in the original languages and his desire to make the Gospel available to his countrymen in their own language.

The object itself must be subject to the rules of simplicity, sobriety, and measure. Concerning the artist Calvin holds that he must be humble, long in preparation and not hasty in execution, expressing himself with clarity and purity. Art becomes creative when human activity is directed to the creative activity of God. Beauty is the brilliance that accompanies such creative activity.

Only the believer can rightfully fulfill his role in the world drama, which must be centered in the religious principle of seeking the glory of God in the universal activity within the framework of the created universe. This is so because the life of the believer has been corrected in principle. He has undergone a change of mind in his conversion.

God has bestowed great freedom and responsibility upon his image-bearer in order that he may rule over creation in a manner analogous to the way God himself conducts the affairs of men. Hence God has not given man a set of artistic norms and rules, but he expects man to discover these for himself. There is, however, says Calvin, one main principle to be observed, namely, art must submit itself in the artist to the Word and the Spirit. This is an absolute principle in Calvin's aesthetics.

Since nature has been given to us by God for our instruction we must be willing to learn from her but not to follow her slavishly. However, our work must be in the spirit and after the meaning of creation. Neither may art seek herself, which was the fault of the Greeks, by which she fell into idolatry. However, art ought to give pleasure or serve a pedagogical purpose within the goal common to all redeemed humanity, namely, confirmation of the kingdom of God on earth.

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[34] Leon G. Wencelius, "The Word of God and Culture," *The Word of God and The Reformed Faith,* (Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1942), p. 164.

[35] Wencelius, *l'Esthetique de Calvin,* p. 104, "une activité terrienne, tuit simplement Humaine," quoted by Rijnsdorp, p. 30.

Art, as such, may be divided into two classes, the mechanical and the free. The first is bound to the materials with which it is produced, such as architecture and the plastic arts; the second, music, painting, and literature are not thus hampered. No art may be condemned simply because it serves pleasure more than utility. However, its joy may never be divorced from the service of humanity and the fear of the Lord. Thus, within God-given limits, art can have its lawful pleasure and healthy joy, but if it transgresses those limits it spoils the order of things. Such unreal art, having lost all measure, flatters the lower passions.

With respect to architecture Calvin says that the pagans succumbed to the temptation of exaggerating the external beauty of their temples. However, religious beauty is not so much the matter of walls as the spiritual unity of the believers. Therefore it is pride and vanity on the part of Rome to build beautiful churches while worshipping contrary to the commandments of God.

There is no prohibition against the plastic arts, but the artist must find his inspiration in nature and submit to her laws. To transform these laws for the creature and give to her a kind of divinity is idolatry. However, these arts must not be permitted to obtrude in worship, since they have an exclusively earthly character and cannot represent uncreated things.

Although Calvin insisted on the holiness of beauty, he had a more direct concern with the beauty of holiness. The beauty of worship is in its spirit and truth. The cultus must reflect the divine glory, as does the created world, since God is central to both. The worship of God ought to be simple, since God is one; pure, because he is holy; harmonious, since it is he that has established the measure for everything.

Music is the foremost of the arts in its adaptability to worship. The object of music is God and his creation. The glory of God and the elevation of man are its goal, and the inspired Psalms are its means. Since it is the goodness of God emanating through the universe that makes men sing, God ought to be the center of man's thoughts and feelings when he sings. Seriousness, harmony, and joy must characterize our songs to God. And, although Calvin does not reject the use of hymns, he prefers to use the Psalms of David in public worship. Song is the unlimited reservoir of power, since it moves our hearts to call upon the name of God more earnestly. By it we are strong in temptation and in the face of persecution (witness the Huguenots and many martyrs who went to the stake singing), and it renews the soul. By singing the church is builded and its members united in the holy bond of love. Calvin did not condemn secular music, namely, that which had the creation of God as its object, out of hand. But the secular may not be godless; it must serve to glorify God indirectly through our joy and elevation. Therefore, music that degrades, that corrupts good manners, that flatters the flesh, must be rejected. For music has a secret and incredible power to move the hearts. When evil words are accompanied by music, they penetrate more deeply and the poison enters as wine through a funnel into the vat.[36]

It is exactly at this point, says Doumergue, that Calvin made a revolutionary transformation of culture by the introduction of the Psalms in the worship service. For the abuse and misuse of music in the Roman Catholic church was grotesque and cannot be understood apart from the total picture of the profligacy of the age as portrayed by Zwingli, Luther and Calvin when they deplore the morality of the church. Doumergue cites the fact that in a Roman Catholic service the leader of song would begin a *Sanctus,* while others, followed by the crowd, sang the words, *Robin m'aime, Trop M'a amour assaillie* (Robin love me; I am too sweet on him). Even the labors of Palestrina against this lascivious and impure music were in vain, for two centuries after the Reformation the prescribed melodies for the Creed, *Pater Noster* and *Ave Maria* were taken from popular contemporary love songs.[37] Calvin has been called the father of the Psalter. Before him the French Reformed churches knew no congregational singing. In 1537 Calvin had already proposed the introduction of congregational singing in Geneva, in order to stir up the cold hearts to prayer and to move them to praise. However, the first edition of the Psalter appeared in Strasbourg in 1539, where Calvin was in exile. It contained his own metrical version of the Psalms of David with twelve of Marot, set to tunes that Calvin found in Strasbourg. Later Calvin eliminated his own poetry and took Marot's version of the Psalms, while the tunes were either composed or arranged by Bourgeois and published in 1562. This version of the Psalter enjoyed twenty-five editions the year of its publication and a total of 1400 editions (*Ibid.,* p. 20).

Calvin himself had discovered the famous tune of Greiter, who was the leader of singing in the cathedral of Strasbourg, and adapted it to his version of Psalm 36. Later Beza took this melody for his version of Psalm 68, which has been called the Protestant Psalm of battles. As a result of Calvin's daring and original work in this phase of Christian culture, the Protestant masters have cultivated rhythm, accent, and melody in the Psalms. Thus the priesthood of believers came to expression in the Calvinistic services. The main tone of the Psalter is serious joy *(Joie grave)*, but it also speaks of power and majesty. It was called the *Siren of Calvinism,* and it became the nemesis of the enemies of the cross of Christ while giving a universal art to all the Protestant churches. Calvin's ideas, which can be found in the *Preface* to the Genevan Psalter, made the greatest impact on the sacred music of the century and form the quintessence of the musical aesthetics of the Reformation.

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[36] Calvin's *Thoughts on the Psalter,* quoted by S. Anema, *Wat Bracht Ons Wencelius,' "l'Esthetique de Calvin?",* pp. 51, 52.

[37] *Op. cit.,* pp. 11, 12.

Writing also was high art for Calvin, and his high regard for the Bible did not quench his enthusiasm for profane literature, which has a calling in the realm of common grace. Instead of alluding to their "splendid vices" (Augustine), Calvin holds that God has adorned the pagans with talents of acuteness and perspicacity in investigating sublunary things (*Inst.* II, 2, 15). It is the same Spirit that dwells only in the faithful, who "replenishes, actuates, and quickens all creatures" (*Ibid.,* par. 16). Therefore, "if it has pleased the Lord that we should be assisted in physics, logic, mathematics, and other arts and sciences, by the labour and ministry of the impious, let us make use of them; lest, if we neglect to use the blessings therein freely offered to us by God, we suffer the just punishment of our negligence" *(Ibid.).*

However, Calvin is ever mindful of the fact that the natural gifts which remained after the fall have been corrupted and produce only a transitory knowledge (*Ibid.,* III, 2, 16). The Lord has, indeed, afforded them "some slight sense of his Divinity, that they might not be able to plead ignorance as an excuse for impiety"; however, "they saw the objects presented to their view in such a manner, that by the sight they were not even directed to the truth, much less did they arrive at it" (*Ibid.,* III, 2, 18). This echoes Plato's allegory of men sitting in the cave, with their backs against the light, so they see but the shadows of images. Here Calvin's evaluation of Plato is *a propos,* who, though the most religious and judicious of all the philosophers, yet "loses himself in his round globe" (*Ibid.,* I, 5, 11). Over against the few truths that "fortuitously besprinkle the books of the pagans, they are defiled with numerous and monstrous falsehoods" *(Ibid.).*

However, for Calvin it was not enough to think well and to know the truth; one must also write well and disseminate the truth. Happily, we need not be satisfied here with theory, for the genius of Geneva has left us a rich heritage of literary excellence, for by predilection Calvin was a man of letters. Conversion and call did not rob him of his training and predilection any more than they robbed him of his manhood. If there is any point on which Calvin's critics agree, it is his superb style as a writer. Here let us apply a French aphorism to the creator of French theological language — *the style is the man (Le Style c'est L'homme!)*. Doumergue tells us that Calvin's style was common, lively, joyful, sympathetic, and noble.[38]

We have already noted the publishing of the *Institutes* as a historic event, but it was also a literary event of the first magnitude. Brunetiére, French literary critic and contemporary of Doumergue, says there is "no literary monument in French earlier that can be compared with it." He is naturally critical of the lack of restraint and good taste in referring to people as donkeys, but he adds, "Let us rather praise the concatenation of his ideas. It is of such a kind, so strong and so close that no matter from what passage we try to take the doctrine which we find, it is always the same connection, the same logic, and the same dependence and subordination of parts. . . . Assuredly we have in our language no better models of that vivacity in reasoning, or rather in argumentation, or of that precision and of that propriety in the use of terms, or of that succinct and telling brevity. We have no more that art of following the thought and explaining all or paraphrasing it without losing the point of view. Calvin's paraphrase of the Decalogue is one of the fine things in the French language." Brunetiére concludes by saying that the *Institutes* was the first book of which we can say that it was classic. "It is equally so . . . by reason of the dignity of the plan, and the manner which the conception of the whole determines the nature and choice of details. It is so by reason of that purpose to convince or to move which, since it is its cause, brings about its internal progress, and the spirit of its attraction and rhetorical grace."[39] This is high praise from a man who held that Calvin had no artistic appreciation.

Space does not permit me to speak particularly of the thirty volumes of Calvin's commentaries, which are marked by philological acuteness and an unerring sense for language. I also pass by the controversial writings, which are in a class by themselves and have contributed to a special genre in French letters, namely, Calvinistic satire. Warfield contends that no more effective controversialist ever wrote, and he cites the *Letter to Sadoleto* as the finest specimen of that most excellent precept for all controversial penmen: *Suaviter in mode; fortiter in re* (gentle in manner, strong in the matter!) .[40]

Calvin also wrote catechisms, creeds, formularies for worship, popular tracts for instruction, and, last but not least, thousands of letters. By these he carried on his pastoral labors among all the Reformed churches of Western Europe. In them he instructs statesmen, reprimands rulers, comforts the sick and those doomed to death, encourages the saints — in short, appears as the real pastor of souls. Calvin's letters, apart from their literary value, reveal his rich religious life, his profound and noble purpose and indefatigable quest toward the achievement of his purpose, and, withal, his deep, human sympathy. Here we see Calvin leaning on his friends as well as giving himself to them ungrudgingly. He certainly had his faults — high temper, impatience, failure to allow the full implications to every man of the spiritual liberty of choosing for or against God — but, it is a base vilification to say that Calvin was hard, bitter, and unloving.[41]

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[38] 38. *Calvijn Als Mens En Hervormer,* pp. 33-53.

[39] 39. "Calvin's Literary Work," *The Presbyterian and Reformed Review,* XII, (1901), pp. 392-414.

[40] 40. Warfield, *Calvin and Calvinism.,* p. 10.

Calvin's Contribution in the Field of Education

It is clear from the foregoing that Calvin was willing to accept the gifts of God's common grace in the field of human culture and even acknowledged unbelievers to be our masters in matters of technique and artistic form. However, he never loses sight of the antithesis in culture, of the opposition between Christ and Satan. This becomes very evident in the crowning work of Calvin, the establishment of the Academy at Geneva. This has been called the seminary of ecclesiastical reformation.

It is impossible to do justice to the historical and technical details of the founding of the Academy in this short resume.[42] However, let us note that Calvin made the education of the youth one of his first concerns upon his arrival in Geneva in 1536. He also voiced the need for an institution of higher learning in 1537 and 1541. But not until Calvin had rest from his enemies around (1555), was he able to give this matter the attention it deserved. The following year he proposed the reorganization of the school system to the council, but that body did not take definite action until 1558, when it approved a plot of ground, which Calvin had chosen for its beauty and utility, and accepted definite plans. To finance this project Calvin himself went out soliciting gifts, collections were taken, testators urged to make donations in their wills, so that by sheer determination and enthusiasm the people overcame their poverty.

Although the building was not finished until 1563, it was dedicated and put into use in 1559. The ever difficult problem of getting instructors was solved by the revolt of the staff of the Lausanne Academy, which resigned in protest against Bern's arrogation of secular authority in cases of spiritual discipline. On June 5, 1559, in the Cathedral Church, Beza, who had been chosen as rector, delivered a notable inaugural oration, in which he congratulated Geneva on having founded a school for liberal studies, free from superstition. The statutes of the school, prepared by Calvin, were read by the secretary, one Roset. Calvin simply made a few closing remarks and offered prayer. The self-lessness of Calvin coupled with his true estimate of his talents ought to be observed in the fact that he made Beza rector rather than himself.

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[41] Paul Woolley, "Zwingli and Calvin," *The Presbyterian Guardian*, (Nov. 1941), p. 122.

[42] Cf. W. Stanford Reid's excellent article, "Calvin and the Founding of the Academy of Geneva," *Westminster Theol. Jour.*, XVIII (1955), pp. 1-35.

Let us also consider how Calvin conceived of the role of education in the reformation of the church and the renovation of culture. From his *Ordre du College de Geneve* it is clear that the basic objective of education was the knowledge of God and of his creation unto the service of God. Such knowledge could be achieved by the study of history, as represented in the classics, and nature, as set forth in natural science. However, since the fall, the natural man cannot come to the true knowledge of God or of his world without regeneration, which alone makes it possible to grasp the meaning of God's revelation in Scripture, and restores man to the proper perspective (Reid, *op. cit.,* p. 21).

This position accords with Calvin's teaching in his *Commentary on First Corinthians,* wherein he treats of the place and importance of pagan culture. Any solid learning, free from superstition, Calvin would rescue by transplanting it into the framework of a Christian philosophy. For unless we see man's wisdom and culture in the light of Christ they are as smoke, made foolish by God. For "man, with all his acuteness, is as stupid for obtaining of himself a knowledge of the mysteries of God, as an ass is unqualified for understanding musical harmonies" (I:20). The study of the arts and sciences is not for the praise of human genius, or the enjoyment of an elite minority, but for the greater glory of God.

Learning is not an individual concern, but for the teaching of others, and both these processes must be made subservient to the service of God and his kingdom. As a matter of fact, a liberal education may not be divorced from man's goal in life, namely, understanding the Scriptures in order to do the will of God. Liberal arts and sciences do not give us the true knowledge of God, unless our eyes have first been opened through the Spirit. And the study of "philosophy, science and eloquence had as their ultimate purpose man's deeper comprehension of that which God says through the Scriptures" (Reid, *op. cit.,* pp. 19, 20).

Calvin's Academy began with 162 boys in attendance, mostly from France, but five years later, at Calvin's death, the lower school had 1200 pupils and the Academy proper, *schola publica,* 300. Thus, says

Charles Borgeaud, the historian of the Academy, Calvin achieved his task: he had secured the future of Geneva . . . making it at once a church, a school, and a fortress. It was the first stronghold of liberty in modern times.[43]

Calvin, it is true, had become an ecumenical figure before the establishment of the Academy by his letters, his commentaries, the influence of the *Institutes,* and his heroic stand against the pope and the hierarchy at every turn of the road; however, the Academy was his crowning achievement. From it emanated a stream of young men, trained for the Gospel ministry, to all the lands of Western Europe. Besides theology and arts and sciences, law and medicine were also taught at Geneva. The cultural influence of Calvin's God-centered educational system is well-nigh incalculable.

In dealing with the impact of Calvin's ideas on politics, economics, art, and education, I have limited myself for the sake of brevity. However, the broad cultural implications are clearly evident.

Conclusion

In summary, it ought to be remembered that Calvin as the theologian of culture was concerned to bring it under the rule of Christ through his Word. In the area of culture man is free under God from the church and from the state. But this is not the freedom of license or the freedom of renouncing the world as evil. By faith man is justified and by regeneration he is renewed into the image of Christ; therefore, the sanctifying influence of the Word must extend to the whole of man's existence under the sun. Every man has a divine calling to fulfill the cultural mandate, for all things are ours, but we are Christ's. However, we must exercise moderation, patience, and fidelity in our daily vocation, working as unto the Lord before the face of God *(Coram Deo).*

Calvin's conception of culture is also radically eschatological. For all of life is a meditation on the life to come, and all must be seen in the light of eternity. Therefore, we must learn to possess and not be possessed by the things of this world, for the world passeth away. Culture is never an end in itself for Calvin. All of scholarship, all of art and learning, as well as the humbler forms of culture, are to be used for the service of God and exercised for the glory of God. Hence a duality in human culture is found to exist, for the activity of man that is not directed to the service and glory of God is self-frustrative, is vain and meaningless. Soli Deo Gloria! To God alone be the glory! That was Calvin's life motto, not only in the work of Christ unto salvation, but also for man's cultural striving.

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[43] Quoted by McNeill, *op. cit.,* p. 196.

CHAPTER VIII

ABRAHAM KUYPER: THEOLOGIAN OF COMMON GRACE AND THE KINGSHIP OF CHRIST

Abraham Kuyper (1837-1920), versatile genius of Dutch Calvinism, has done more than any other man to define the concept, Calvinistic culture. Not only did Kuyper seek to give content to the definition of culture on a Calvinistic foundation, but his whole life was one grand demonstration of the idea. He entered with zest into the contest of claiming the crown rights of Christ as Lord. He was not only a dogmatician but also a statesman; he was a professor of theology and prime minister of the queen; he gave learned lectures but also roused men to their political and social duties; Kuyper was educator, journalist, author of many books, orator of great stature, art lover, and world traveler.

It is quite impossible to deal adequately with the theology of Kuyper in one chapter. Hence it is omitted except insofar as a summary statement of certain elements is needed in order to understand his concept of culture, on which several separate volumes have been written.[1] Kuyper, according to his own conviction, was merely a copyist of Calvin. He intended to follow Calvin in utter fidelity to the Word and in the confession of God's sovereignty as expressed in the kingship of the glorified Christ. In his inaugural lecture at the founding of the Free University of Amsterdam in 1880, Kuyper threw out this challenge to the world: "There is not an inch in the whole area of human existence of which Christ, the sovereign of all does not cry, 'It is Mine.' "[2]

That Kuyper's views have been called Neo-Calvinism,[3] in spite of his own plea of faithfulness to the master, is due to the fact that Kuyper was not a slavish copyist but worked on in the spirit of Calvin. Hence we must not look for repristination pure and simple, nor an uncritical admiration of Calvin by his great disciple.

Kuyper worked in the spirit of Calvin. When he was willing to slough off any part of the Calvinistic heritage, as in the case of a change he proposed concerning article thirty-six of the Belgic Confession, it was because he was convinced that this article was actually contrary to the spirit of Calvinism. If Kuyper added anything to Calvin, it was with the understanding that he was making patent what had been latent, of stating explicitly what was already implied. This does not mean that one is obliged to take Kuyper as is, without criticism. There is no doubt that he was one of the greatest modern exponents of Calvinism, but this does not imply that one must accept the remnants of a synthesis philosophy or the polar dualism that lies at the heart of his view of grace. But more of this later.

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[1] Cf. S. J. Ridderbos, *De Theologische Cultuur Beschouwing Van Abraham Kuyper* (Kampen, 1947); A. A. Van Ruler, *Kuyper's Idee Eener Christelijke Cultuur* (Nijkerk, n.d.); Th. L. Haitjema, *De Cultuur-waardeering van het* Nieuw-Calvinisme (1919).

[2] *Souvereiniteit in Eigen Kring,* 3d ed., (Kampen, 1930), p. 32, (trans. mine).

[3] Cf. C. B. Hylkema, *Oud En Nieuw Calvinisme* (Haarlem, 1911).

For the present, let it suffice to say that Kuyper placed the self-glorification of God[4] at the center of his theology just as Calvin did. But whereas Calvin contended against the theology of the Catholics and Anabaptists and the Humanists, Kuyper, as apologist of Calvinism, was mainly engaged in setting forth the claims of Christ for the entire field of culture and in setting his spiritual kin free from their Anabaptistic isolationism. With this in mind, let us examine, in this chapter, Kuyper's theological conception of culture and take note of his main contributions to the Calvinistic culture of his own country, the Netherlands.

* * *

Kuyper would agree that culture includes all man's labor for the development and maintenance of the cosmos, and the results of that labor, both in nature and man. But, without the common grace of God, no culture would have been forthcoming. The world, because of sin, would have been destroyed if the common grace of God had not intervened (*GG*, I, 213, 220). As such common grace is the foundation of culture, since God's great plan for creation is achieved through common grace (*GG*, II, 28, 630-31). Common grace is not spiritual and recreative, but temporal and material (I, 86, 92, 296; III, 107-10; 331). It is based upon and flows forth from the confession of the absolute sovereignty of God, for, says Kuyper, not only the church but the whole world must give God honor; hence the world received common grace in order to honor him through it.[5] Thus Kuyper maintains the catholic claims of Christianity and urges its validity for all men. Common grace, although non-saving and restricted to this life (I, 220, 497; II, 277, 679), has its source in Christ as mediator of creation (II, 645) since all things exist through the eternal Word. Hence, the point of departure for common grace is creation and the sphere of the natural. But it may also be called supernatural, because it is God's longsuffering mercy to which man as such has no right. As such it is a glimmer of light in the midst of darkness (I, 243).

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[4] *Gemeene Gratie* (Kampen, 4th ed. n.d.) II, p. 119 (Note: for the remainder of this chapter this work will be abbreviated G.G. and the references included in the text between brackets).

[5] *Het Calvinisme en de Kunst* (Amsterdam, 1888), p. 76, footnote 77.

Kuyper gives to common grace the independent role of developing creation and making history and culture possible (II, 118, 635; III, 302). This is not a denial of total depravity but assumes its reality as a heinous power in the life of man, which is, however, under the control of God. For through the action of God's common grace the power of sin and its poisonous results are arrested and restrained (I, 246; II, 506). This is the constant action of common grace, which is always the same (II, 604) and operates irrespective of human action and reaction. By it the curse is postponed (I, 222, 254, 263); however, prolongation of history also readies hell (III, 107ff.; 215-16; II, 224).

It ought to be observed at once that Kuyper was not always consistent in holding to the independent and self-sufficient purpose of common grace. Although Kuyper holds that without continuation of the race special grace would have been impossible (I, 222, 254, 263), he also says that without special grace common grace would have had no purpose (I, 400; 224, 220). It was on the basis of this discrepancy that Van Ruler says that Kuyper can never really get special grace into the picture.[6] It must be granted that Kuyper gave occasion for this criticism by his philosophical distinction between the essential basis of special grace as supernatural and belonging to the realm of glory while common grace is restricted to the realm of creaturehood. This was interpreted by Van Ruler as a dualistic, spiritualistic, eschatological conception in which the unity of the Christian life would be broken, so that his supernatural salvation never really became effective in the world of created things.

However, this is not the only view presented by Kuyper. Although his homesickness for heaven may at times have betrayed him to speak of particular grace as outside of this life, on the other hand, he keeps reminding the pilgrim that he must travel through this world, and that he must live a life of gratitude for his salvation, subject to the God-ordained ordinances of creation (III, 307-8). And although common grace is said to reduce sin to a minimum (II, 613-14), and Kuyper falls at this point into cultural optimism, thus obscuring his eschatological anticipation, yet he holds that the original creation triumphs in the recreation (I, 489) and that common grace would have no purpose outside of particular grace (I, 220, 224, 449). Thus our life in this world is not something that stands alongside of our religion, for everything in this world belongs to Christ and is claimed by him (I, 226, 228). Furthermore, Van Ruler has not properly credited Kuyper's solution of the polar tension between common and particular grace, which is resolved in the doctrine of the latter. In his doctrine of special grace, regeneration is not a change of being but a profoundly religious change of mind, or heart, which is the inner pivot on which man's whole being turns (II, 298). Thus recreation restores creation in its root (II, 183).

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[6] *Op. cit.*, p. 68.

Common grace then, has a negative, constant influence in restraining sin and has its effects both in man and in the universe; but it also has a positive action which is progressive. It functions as a culture-forming and activating power in history, in which man is both the instrument and co-worker with God (II, 606; 507-9; III, 124). Whereas the first volume of Kuyper's epical work on common grace sets forth the essence of common grace as the restraint of sin, the second volume sets forth the progressive aspects of common grace (II, 600, 605, 609, etc.). It was in his common grace to all mankind that God as the supreme architect of the world brought progress in his providence, which is the fountain of human history (II, 609). Human history, according to God's eternal decree, was to run its course for the self-glorification of God (II, 611); hence common grace must also have been included in that eternal decree. Without this, the course of history would be altogether unintelligible. For particular grace, which saves unto eternal life, must have a base of operations. It cannot function in a void. The world must continue, men must be born, the course of history must show progress; for all of these things to take place, common grace is necessary, whereby the original powers latent in creation may come to fruition and find their highest development to the glory of God (II, 118; III, 435). Civilization, enlightenment, development and advancement cannot be ascribed to Satan but proceed from God (II, 607), so that we may speak of a continuous development of the human race (I, 253) by which it collectively exhibits the image of God.

Culture, then, is a gift of common grace, rooted in nature. This grace is common to the believer and the unbeliever, and its abuse does not change its gracious character, namely, an unmerited, forfeited mercy of God. It is due to this common grace that the cultural subject has retained a sense of God and of morality. However, Kuyper believes on the basis of Romans 1 that man's natural knowledge of God and moral sense will increasingly diminish due to the withdrawal of common grace (I, 415-46). But, although the natural man is unable to do any spiritual good, he is, nevertheless, because of common grace, able to perform civic righteousness. He can do moral good (I, 252-53; II, 200-1; 303-11; 416-17). These in turn are the means by which God is gracious to fallen man. For, through the sciences of medicine and jurisprudence, moral and natural good has been achieved (*GG, Appendix,* 42, 43). Here man appears as the co-worker with God as well as instrument of God (II, 606). Due to the fall of man, the seed of Adam lost its kingship over nature on which culture is basically posited, says Kuyper; but through common grace this power over nature is restored in the advances of science, whereby the effects of the curse are diminished. Hereby the glory of the image of God in mankind is exhibited, of which the fruits shall enter into the eternal kingdom (I, 458).

Kuyper does not say that the actual cultural objects or the products of culture will survive and will express themselves in higher cultural forms than they did on earth, for the fashion of this earth passeth away. On the basis of Revelation 21:26, "And they shall bring the glory and the honor of the nations into it," namely, into the new Jerusalem, Kuyper believes that the universal human development in every field of culture will surely carry over into eternity, minus the baleful influences of sin, of course. For the meek shall inherit the earth, but this surely cannot mean a naked earth, shorn of all the accomplishments of human culture. Such would not be a worthy patrimony, but the earth, with all the rich booty of centuries of culture, shall belong to the poor in spirit, for "all things are yours" (I Cor. 3:21), (*GG,* I, 462-66). Moreover, whatever we have personally achieved in the way of cultural development will be ours and is not lost in the new earth (*GG,* I, 466) for it is written, "And their works do follow them" (Rev. 14:13). Our works are the results of our labors, both of common and of particular grace (*GG,* I, 466-74). The parable of the talents teaches us that what we gain here will be a gain for eternity (*GG,* I, 481-82).

All of this is further grounded in the supposition that the whole creation will not be destroyed but that it shall be glorified. The form of this world may pass away, but the substance remains (*GG,* I, 465, 483-89). The general conclusion of Kuyper is that culture has an eternal future, with the restriction that all that was interwoven with sin will perish, but that the germ, the substance and basic meaning, will be continued in the new earth.

One of the services of common grace is that it gives particular grace a basis for operation. This is evident in the restraint of sin in the individual and in society and the arresting of the curse over nature. But it also appears in the positive sense of producing the culture of the fulness of time for the incarnation of God's Son. It was through common grace that the world remained, but there were people in it to be reborn by the Spirit. But common grace also produced the conditions necessary so that the Spirit could be poured out upon all flesh and the church could enter upon its missionary challenge. Thus the pagan world and the unbelieving world in general perform an indirect service to the church in its cultural striving. As a matter of fact, the church needs a form of government and rulers that will permit it to dwell in peace and without turmoil to perform its task of preaching. The very possibility of the antithesis between the kingdom of Christ and that of Satan as it comes to expression in this world is due to the common grace of God.

Although in general common grace must advance the cause of particular grace, Kuyper is too much of a realist not to know that culture may be, and often is, a handicap and a foe of faith (II, 182). For not only may culture become an obstacle to faith, it also advances godlessness (*PR,* I, 43-46).[7] But this is essentially an abuse of culture (*GG,* I, 452; II, 517; *PR,* III, 21, 22, 480, 522). The very appearance of the antichrist will be at the acme of cultural achievement.

How can we reconcile this idea with Kuyper's proposition that common grace is shrinking as history advances? According to Kuyper there are two levels of cultural development under the common grace of God; one is technical and intellectual, the other ethical and spiritual. Alongside of the higher development of the former, there will be a gradual degeneration of the latter (*GG,* I, 415, 432-33; 447-50, 455-56). Therefore, as history progresses, there will appear an increasingly conscious opposition to the kingdom of Christ, which constitutes an abuse of common grace by the haters of God (I, 452).

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At this juncture we must turn to a consideration of the doctrine of special grace, its impact upon culture as a whole and its meaning for a distinctly Calvinistic culture.

Particular grace is that gracious inclination of God toward elect sinners, with whom he has reconciled himself for the sake of Christ's vicarious atonement on Calvary. As a result, Christ with all his benefits is conferred on these chosen sinners, out of free sovereign grace. This redemptive plan and process is effectuated in the lives of God's people through his Spirit, by regeneration, sanctification, and preservation. By this operation of special grace sinners are renewed in the center of their being through the Spirit and are grafted into Christ's spiritual body, so that they become subject to him as Lord and King and are dominated by the expulsive power of a new affection. The new creation thus formed belongs to Christ (*GG,* II, 672; *PR,* II, 130-31).

Although the church is the instrument of particular grace in the realm of common grace, one must not identify the two. Kuyper, at this point, is greatly concerned to keep culture secular, by which he means, simply, free from the domination of the church. There was no wish on his part to return to the medieval social-religious structure of the *Corpus Christianum,* a society dominated by the church.[8] And the question of how particular grace effects common grace presupposes for him the independent goal of common grace to develop culture by cultivating and preserving the creation of God (II, 275-78; 507-9; III, 124, etc.) . However, there is a twofold influence of particular grace upon common grace, namely, an indirect and a direct.

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[7] *P. R.* is the abbreviation for *Pro Rege. Het Koningschap van Christus* (Kampen, 1911), a monumental work of three volumes, in which Kuyper develops the conception of a Christian culture as the service the Christian owes to Christ, the King.

Indirectly, the Christian faith has caused life to flourish. The appearance of the Word and of the church strengthens, enriches, elevates life in general (II, 246, 260, 275; III, 144) . The church by its influence has made history universally human; it has catholicized the human spirit. Unbelievers as well as believers pluck the fruits. As evidence Kuyper cites the European-American culture with its political dominance by which the colonies share in the benefits of particular grace (*GG,* II, 670-71, 668f.; *PR,* III, 311-16) . The church is become the city upon a hill, to which all men look, so that particular grace baptizes common grace, as it were, with its blessings, christianizing her realm (*GG,* 672-74) . Kuyper goes so far as to say that only a civilization that has its roots in the Christian religion is a true civilization (III, 405) . It is the Christian faith which finally gives freedom to the powers of common grace and delivers them from the bonds of sin and the devil and the enslavement to nature. At this point Kuyper is an apologist for Christianity, holding that world history proves its worth and usefulness for culture (III, 105; I, 457) . As a negative instance, Kuyper points to Borneo, which has not undergone the elevating influences of Christian culture.

This universally human culture which we find in Christian nations Kuyper designates as "Christian" in the broad sense of the term. Thus we may speak of a Christian family, society, and even a Christian state, when the realm of common grace has undergone this Christianizing influence of particular grace. However, when his political opponents speak of the nation's public schools as Christian because they have undergone this broad Christianizing influence, Kuyper repudiates his former usage.[9]

Besides this indirect influence of particular grace in the realm of common grace, there is the direct influence through the cultural subject, the regenerated man, whose spiritual-ethical nature has been changed by regeneration, so that he becomes a new creature. Thus there are basically two kinds of people in the world. Kuyper calls them the *Normalists* and the *Abnormalists,* corresponding to the once-born and the twice-born of William James. The former think of the cosmos as being normal today, so that "it moves by means of an eternal evolution from its potencies to its ideal." On the other hand, the Abnormalists hold that a *disturbance* has taken place in the past and that "only a *regenerating* power can warrant it the final attainment of its goal. This, and no other is the principal antithesis, which separates the thinking minds in the domain of Science into two opposite battle-arrays."[10]

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[8] Cf. S. U. Zuidema, "Gemene Gratie en Pro Rege by Dr. Abraham Kuyper," in *Anti-Revolutionare Staatkunde,* XXIV, 12, 1954, p. 7.

[9] Cf. Ridderbos, *op. cit.,* p. 160.

The above quotation from the Stone Lectures, given at Princeton in 1898, brings us face to face with the radical (going down to the root) and penetrating character of the Kuyperian philosophy of Calvinistic culture. It is both positive and negative. It contends for the faith and against unbelief in the realm of culture, and bases this cultural antithesis upon the disjunction in the spiritual world of which Augustine spoke when he distinguished between the kingdom of God and that of this world, between the new humanity and that which still lives in enmity with God and tends to the judgment (*GG,* II, 23; *Enc,* II, 96f.).[11]

This new humanity is, for Kuyper, the church as an organism,[12] impelled by the Spirit and obedient to Christ, functioning in the area of common grace to fulfill the creative will of God. Particular grace, although directed in origin and goal to the spiritual, permeates one's whole being. Not only the core, namely, the heart, but all of the believer's life, including his activities in politics, education, marriage, industry and the whole gamut of social relationships is thus affected (*GG,* II, 350; I, 644, 684). Thus the kingdom of heaven appears not only eschatologically at the denouement of history, but also here and now (*GG,* II, 672). It is the task of the church as an organism, either personally or in organized unity, in the realm of common grace, to fulfill the common cultural mandate for the sake of the king *(Pro Rege).* This constitutes the warfare of the Christian in this world in distinction from the activity of the church in the preaching of the Word and evangelization (*PR* I, 370, 526, 567; III, 149, 570-71, 582).

In the broader cultural field there are certain activities that are not affected by particular grace, such as architecture and dentistry. Particular grace does not give a man a better understanding of such technical matters, nor does it give any additional knowledge or craftsmanship in any of the arts (*GG,* III, 144-45, 413). In science, for example, the difference between a natural and a spiritual man does not count when they are engaged in such simple activities as weighing, measuring, counting, etc. Observation is said to be non-scientific in nature, and Kuyper maintains that looking through a microscope or a telescope are forms of observation. Logic also is neutral. But when an attempt is made to interpret the facts empirically gathered, and to arrive at "the thought which governs the whole constellation of phenomena," then we may truly speak of science emerging. And in this field of interpretation the impact of particular grace is very great.[13]

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[10] *Calvinism,* (Grand Rapids, 1943), p. 132.

[11] *Enc.* is the abbreviation for *Encyclopaedie der Heilige Godgeleerdheid* (Amsterdam, 1894). This is a three-volume work in which Kuyper discusses the whole range of human science in order to come to a proper understanding of the place of theology. The second volume is the only one that has been consulted in this study, since it more especially deals with the effect of regeneration on the scientific enterprise. This volume was translated by J. Hendrik De Vries in 1895 and republished by Eerdmans under the title: *Principles of Sacred Theology* in 1954.

[12] Kuyper distinguishes the organism, made up of the living members of the body of Christ and making an impact, both individually and collectively, by their testimony and program of action in this world; and, the church as institute, appearing in the visible organization with officers, means of grace, discipline, etc.

This is so because science is not vitiated by subjectivity but by sin, from which the whole antithesis between truth and falsehood is born.[14] The Normalists, says Kuyper, will not recognize the fact of sin and its deleterious effects on man's capacity for acquiring truth while the Abnormalists accept the verdict of God's word concerning man's total inability and his hatred of the truth of God.

This conflict which here emerges is not a matter of faith being at odds with science, for faith is the presupposition of every science. Faith is "that formal function of the life of our soul which is fundamental to every fact in our human consciousness" (*Ibid.,* p. 125). Without believing in oneself one cannot take the first step in the quest of science; it is the starting-point of conduct for which there is no empirical or demonstrative proof. All rational demonstration proceeds on unproved axioms, accepted by faith. As a matter of fact, all of life proceeds on faith. "In every expression of his personality, as well as in the acquisition of scientific conviction, every man starts out from faith" (*Ibid.,* p. 143). "As long as the material world is the object of our scientific investigation faith renders the exclusively formal service of making us believe in our senses, in the reality of the phenomena, and in the axioms and laws of Logic by which we demonstrate" (*Ibid.,* p. 145, 146). But in the spiritual sciences "all the data by which I labor . . . fall away as soon as I consign faith to non-activity" (*Ibid.,* p. 146).

Now Kuyper maintains that since there are two kinds of people in the world due to the fact of regeneration *(palingenesis),* whereby the unity of human consciousness has been broken, there must perforce be two kinds of science, of which only one can be essentially true. For this reason "the idea of the *unity of science,* taken in its absolute sense, implies the denial of the fact of *palingenesis,* and therefore from principle leads to the rejection of the Christian religion" (*Ibid.,* p. 154). However, formally both kinds of men are engaged in the scientific enterprise, and they recognize each other's

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13. *Calvinism,* pp. 112, 113.
14. *Principles of Sacred Theology,* p. 118.

scientific labors in the same way that two opposing armies are mutually able to appreciate military honor and worth.

With regard to this antithesis that characterizes the world in which we live and extends to the scientific enterprise, Kuyper says that it is not a conflict of faith and science, *"but two scientific systems,* or if you choose, two scientific elaborations, are opposed to each other, *each having its own faith.* Nor may it be said that it is here *science* which opposes *theology,* for we have to do with two absolute forms of science, *both* of which claim the whole domain of human knowledge, and both of which have a suggestion about the supreme Being of their own as the point of departure for their world-view. Pantheism as well as Deism is a system about God, and without reserve the entire modern theology finds its home in the science of the Normalists. And finally, these two scientific systems of the Normalists and the Abnormalists are not relative opponents, walking together half way, and, further on, peaceably suffering one another to choose different paths, but they are both in earnest, disputing with one another *the whole domain of life,* and they cannot desist from the constant endeavor to pull down to the ground *the entire edifice* of their respective controverted assertions, all the supports included, upon which their assertions rest. If they did not try this, they would thereby show on both sides that they did not honestly believe in their point of departure, that they were no serious combatants, and that they did not understand the primodial demand of science, which of course claims *unity of conception"* (*Calvinism,* p. 133).

We ought to note that Kuyper will have nothing of a two-level theory of truth, which divides the religious-ethical sphere from the scientific. What is true religiously must also be so scientifically. The seamless robe of truth may not be torn asunder, as the Modernists do so blithely when they affirm the resurrection of Jesus Christ as a religious fact but deny its scientific standing as something that cannot be historically verified. Kuyper demanded unity in his interpretation of the universe and God. The pattern must be one. Hence the absolute antithesis! We are not *relative* opponents! Our dispute concerns *the whole domain of life,* and we seek to destroy the entire edifice of our enemies, and we do not rest until all the supports of his system are demolished. As a matter of fact, any kind of apologetics that deals only with details is useless. It does not cut any ice to dispute about observable facts, or "the somatic side of the psychical sciences, or, finally, a logical fault in argumentation" (*Princ. of S. Th.,* p. 160).

But the reason that the antithesis is not more apparent is that we have the facts in common, a common logic and a common methodology for getting at the facts, and a common language for expressing ourselves. Besides, the transformation of consciousness, achieved by regeneration, is not complete at once, so that the Abnormalists do not always proceed to live according to this new life principle in the whole of their being as it comes to expression in time. Furthermore, "There is an adoration and a self-abasement before God, a love and a self-denial before our fellow-men, a growth in what is pure and heroic and formative of character, which far excels all beauty of science" (*Ibid.,* p. 165). Due to this, many twice-born men enter into the service of the church, and, since science is dominated by Normalists, the sons of *palingensis* are unable to obtain any of the chairs of learning in the great European universities. Kuyper contends that it was only since the Renaissance that the Humanists and Naturalists became fully conscious of their own presuppositions, so that the struggle against the doctrine of revelation became more determined. As a result of this clear antagonism between the forces of God and the forces of Satan in the field of knowledge, Kuyper called on his fellow believers to set up their own scientific laboratories and to carry on the scientific enterprise on the basis of consciously elaborated presuppositions. This was achieved in the founding of the Free University of Amsterdam in 1880, the only university of its kind in the world.

To the uninitiated, this position of Kuyper may sound like the height of intolerance, but Kuyper disallows this accusation and turns the tables upon his opponents. As a matter of fact, the Normalists are really intolerant and the enemies of free science, since they will not allow any differences to exist in the fundamental human consciousness. Since the Normalists do not have the consciousness of sin, the certainty of faith, and the testimony of the Holy Spirit, they will not allow such evidence to stand in the court of man's theory of knowledge. The Normalists would force their consciousness upon all as being the authoritative human mind. Of course, from their point of view nothing else could be expected, and, if they conceded the possibility of the truth of our claims, they would thereby have admitted our basic claims concerning the abnormality of the constitution of things. On the other hand, it is the merit of Kuyper that he saw clearly that if we allow the Normalists to make their consciousness the basis of truth, we are lost. The battle must be fought at the level of human consciousness, and not in the field of scientific facts as such. For if a "man's own consciousness is his *primun-verum,* and hence must be also the starting point for every scientist, then the logical conclusion is that it is an impossibility that both should agree, and that every endeavor to make them agree must be doomed to failure" (*Calvinism,* p. 138).

It is, furthermore, Kuyper's claim that Calvinism, as the purest expression of the Christian faith, has made a great contribution to science. Both, as historical fact, witness the founding of the University of Leiden by William of Orange, and as the result of its principle of predestination, Calvinism has activated scientific investigation and fostered a love for science. For science seeks unity of comprehension, the one among the many, harmony, plan, stability, and order. This is furnished by the Calvinistic doctrine of foreordination, according to which all things come to pass after the counsel of God! (*Ibid.,* pp. 112-17).

Moreover, Calvinism restored science to its lawful domain by urging men back from the cross to creation and preaching Christ as the cosmic redeemer. For by him all things were made and for him all things wait; even the dumb creation groaneth and travaileth, waiting for the adoption of the sons of God, to share in his glory.

Again, it was Calvinism which restored to science its *indispensable liberty,* that is, not the liberty of license to deny God and seek the glory of man, but liberty from the tutelage of the church, under which it was groaning during the Middle Ages. This liberty is indispensable in order that science may develop according to the laws of its own being in the realm of common grace. Not only did Calvinism force the church back into the realm of particular grace, but the Calvinistic countries were the haven of freedom for men of science. Furthermore, Kuyper adds the fact that a demand for science had to be created. This was accomplished by Calvinism when it cut the root idea that the bliss of heaven was earned by human striving, thus setting the energies of men free to subdue the earth and to give their attention to fulfilling the cultural mandate (*Calvinism,* pp. 126, 130).

Kuyper also claims the sphere of art for the King. In one of his *Stone Lectures,* "Calvinism and Art," he maintains that art is the result of God's gifts to mankind. It is a reflection, on the created level, in God's image-bearers of the glory and power of the creator. God himself creates reality, we create the unreal creations of art; that is, we imitate God when we reproduce in a finite way some aspect of reality in sensuous form. "We create a kind of cosmos, in our Architectural monuments; to embellish nature's forms, in Sculpture; to reproduce life, animated by lines and tints, in our Painting; to transfuse the mystical spheres in our Music and Poetry" (*Calvinism,* p. 156). This is possible because beauty is not a subjective quality of the human mind, but it is an expression of divine perfection impressed upon creation. Hence art offers us a higher reality than is offered in this sinful world (*Ibid.,* p. 154). Therefore, the imitation of nature, the ideal of the Greeks, is unworthy of high art. True, there is room for a sound realism in art so that the forms and relations of nature may not be discarded. We must beware of falling into the ditch on the other side, namely, that of Romanticism and Impressionism. Art, however, "has the mystical task of reminding us in its productions, of the beautiful that was lost and of anticipating its perfect coming luster" (*Ibid.,* p. 155).

Calvinism gave the final impetus for the liberation of art from the tutelage of the church. This had not been achieved by the Renaissance, which merely reverted to paganism but did not throw off the yoke of clericalism. It was the great service of Calvinism to oppose both the pagan mind and humanistic Aestheticism, both which worship the beautiful in the creature, instead of the creator. And, "Because Calvinism preferred a worship of God in spirit and truth, to sacerdotal wealth, it has been accused by Rome of being devoid of appreciation of art, and because it disapproved of a woman debasing herself as an artist's model or casting away her honor in the ballet, its moral seriousness has clashed with the sensualism of those who deemed no sacrifice too sacred for the Godess of art" (*Ibid.,* p. 145). The fact that Calvinism developed no dominant art style of its own is ascribed, therefore by Kuyper, to the spiritual character of Calvinistic religion which did not allow the "wedding of art-inspired worship, with worship-inspired art" (*Ibid.,* p. 146).

Kuyper maintains with a good deal of reason that the great architectural monuments of antiquity as the Pantheon, Parthenon, Saint Sophia and even St. Peter's cathedral at Rome during the Middle Ages were the result of the imposition of the same form of religion upon the whole people by prince and priest, so that art was dominated by the demands of worship at a lower stage of the development of religion. But the Reformation, with its evangelical principle of direct access to God, threw off this yoke, making the church spiritual and giving art the range of the secular. By secular Kuyper never means that which is profane in the sense of godless, but that which lies outside of the hegemony of the priesthood. With this newly found freedom, Calvinism turned its attention to the individual man and every aspect of social life. Art became truly democratic, did not restrict itself to priest and prince. It also took into its purview the body, not in the pagan sense of animal vitality and lust, but as instrument of the soul, since the Calvinist confesses belonging to his faithful Saviour with body and soul. Even the doctrine of election, says Kuyper, has the practical effect of drawing attention to the little, the insignificant, and the lowly, for there is nothing that is worthless and without value, since the very hairs of our head are all numbered. But, on the other hand, there is no respect of persons with God. No longer did art exclusively direct its attention to Greek demigods, to heroes and saints, but the common man came into prominence and human personality as such took the center of the stage. But also human suffering and misery, as part of God's all-wise providence, are depicted sympathetically, and the somber tints and tones form a strong contrast to the central light.[15]

Although Kuyper does not express the principle of antithesis as poignantly in his exposition of art as in that of science, he does maintain the basic disjunction between the regenerate and the unregenerate. There is in art a sphere of the purely technical, just as in science in which we move on common ground, but the artist is inspired either by the Spirit of God or by the spirit of the antichrist.[16] It is true that the inspiration of the artist cannot be expressed with equal effect in every art, but even in higher architecture we find the expression of authority, imperialism, freedom, the idea of the heavenly. This is accentuated in painting and sculpture in accordance with the subjects chosen and the manner of execution. However, the spiritual character of the artist comes to expression most forcibly in song and music *(toonkunst)* (*GG, Appen.* 85, 86; *PR,* III, 557). But art remains art even though it becomes demonic (*PR,* III, 579), in which case it ought to be abhorred by all who confess that of him, and through him, and unto him, are all things, to whom be the glory forever (Rom. 11:36).

Christian art, for Kuyper, is not found primarily in that art which denies paganism in its subject matter and serves the church, as we find in some medieval art. But Christian art denies the Greek-pagan conception of man and nature and permits its view of life to be determined by the incarnation and death of Christ. It receives its higher inspiration from the perspectives that are opened by the resurrection and ascension.[17] Kuyper speaks in this connection of the catharsis of Golgotha, which ought to replace the classical-pagan concept of cleansing of the soul. Christian art ought to make us feel and think and will the world in a different sense than did the ancients. If, then, the Christian has a totally different communion with the non-sensuous *(onzinnelyke)* world, every revelation of art which is in opposition to and negates the purpose of Christ's coming into the world is by that fact anti-Christian (*Ibid.,* p. 81). To my mind, this is the finest cultural expression of the biblical principle that every spirit that confesseth not Jesus Christ as having come into the world is of the anti-christ (I John 4:4). Therefore, Calvinistic art, in as far as it expresses the significance of Christ's coming into the world, stands higher than any other in Kuyper's book (*PR,* III, 557, 579).

The regenerated man must live *Pro Rege,* for the King, in every cultural activity, in every societal relationship, and every communal organization. Marriage, the family, the educational institutions, the state, and society as a whole must be organized along Christian principles. This does not mean that creation is negated, but it must be restored to serve God's great original purpose for his glory (*GG*, II, 341, 355, 372). But this calls forth the antithesis. The spiritual opposition to the kingdom of God comes to expression in the sphere of common grace, as well as in the church. Kuyper was convinced that the worldly kingdom uses the gifts of common grace to oppose the heavenly with increasing strength and fury (*PR*, III, 225). Therefore, Kuyper concludes, if we would fight the good fight of faith, we must face the world as an organized force. Within the family and the nation, to be sure, it is impossible to withdraw from the fellowship of unbelievers, for in these societal units we are members, willy-nilly. But, in the free organizations within the society, the Calvinists ought to organize their own opposition to the spirit of the antichrist in such spheres as that of labor and industry, education and science, art and politics. This has been called the organizational antithesis. Kuyper was convinced that there was no other way for the Christian to work and witness successfully in society than through separate organizations. He goes so far as to call this the third instrument, next to church and school, by which Christ maintains his hegemony in society. He justifies such organization in principle on the basis of Paul's warning to the Corinthian Christians not to go to law against a brother (I Cor. 6:4) and the prohibition against putting on an unequal yoke with an unbeliever (II Cor. 6:14). The latter text gives us full warrant to separate Christian organizations within the commonwealth, within the fabric of society (*PR*, III, 188-89).

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[15] *Het Calvinisme en de Kunst,* pp. 20-27.

[16] *Appendix to Gemeene Gratie,* pp. 89, 90; *Alles is Het Uwe,* pp. 5-10.

[17] *Het Calvinisme en de Kunst,* pp. 29, 80, footnote 92.

This is also a practical expedient for Kuyper, since the worldly element is organized on a non-Christian basis of anarchism and socialism. However, though they profess neutrality, the men who control such so-called neutral organizations express their hatred of Christian principles. Besides, the rule expressed by Paul, that evil communications corrupt good manners, also applies. Christians become contaminated by fellowship with ungodly men whose entire goal is temporal and material. Finally, Kuyper makes an appeal to experience when he says that neutral organizations were tried but the contrast with unbelievers was so great that life itself forced the Calvinists to separation; it is a matter of self-preservation in the world (*PR*, III, 193-94).

Kuyper would have repudiated the thought that such separate organizations constitute a going out of the world, for he was always conscious of the twofold relationship, *in the world* but *not of the world.* The Christian has a threefold calling within society: to live in the world as a member of the organized church of Jesus Christ;

to live in society as a member of the body of Christ, that is, to be organized together with other Christians in opposition to the world and for the king; to join with unbelievers in society as a whole to seek the welfare of the whole. With respect to the last, Kuyper was in favor of joining unbelievers upon the basis of our common manhood in such things as sports (apart from the question of keeping the day of the Lord holy), civil defense, chess, singing, cooking lessons, works of mercy, and support of the poor. Neither may we ever say, in spite of the fact that sin has corrupted all of human life in a measure, that the abuse takes away the lawful use of God's good gifts. Hence the production, development, and distribution of earthly goods is not an unlawful occupation for Christians. Work is not a result of sin, but a creation ordinance, however the fact that most of earth's inhabitants eke out a mere existence is due to sin. Kuyper has the rather strange idea that man was called in Paradise to spiritual labor and that sin brought about physical labor, for which there is no biblical warrant, since part of Adam's commission was to belabor the ground.

A brief comment on Kuyper's cultural evaluation of play is also in order. Play is given with creation, to express man's free spirit and it reflects the divine image. Of the second person of the blessed Trinity, we read in Scripture that he was daily the delight of the Father, "Rejoicing (*playing* in the Dutch translation) always before him, Rejoicing in his habitable earth" (Prov. 8:30, 31). A child plays instinctively, but mature men must play to get rid of ennui. During the period of the florescence of Calvinism in the Netherlands, Kuyper informs us, folk-play was an important factor in national life; but, when pseudo-Calvinism took over, play became taboo. Furthermore, play in our day has degenerated because of the money involved. Performers will not play except for large sums of money. Playing cards in itself is not immoral, but it becomes so through money. Immorality in the theater also to a great extent is due to money which is paid to produce the obscene and immoral. Kuyper would have Christians refrain from any play in which money is the end or in which fortune is the deciding issue. To counteract the world in this field, separate organizations of young people are necessary to save them from the corrupting influences of the world (*PR*, III, pp. 125-35).

Kuyper, like Calvin, had a very strong social consciousness. He believed in individual initiative as a blessing of God and a result of the development of society out of its primitive condition. But the great danger of "rugged individualism" must not be dismissed as imaginary. Already, in the absolute right of property among the Romans, this danger was immanent, and it received its highest expression in the individualism of the French Revolution. This is also the point of departure for all temperate forms of Liberalism (*PR,* III, p. 150). On the other hand, among Israel we find many laws limiting the concept of absolute free disposition of property by the owners. Under the motto of liberty, and independence, we may not resist the ordinances of the government for the restraint of the strong. For often they exercise the power of money to make economic slaves out of laborers, so that the freedom of the worker becomes only a freedom to starve (*GG,* III, 444). Scripture guarantees property rights, but the government may on occasion for the common good have to restrict or even temporarily abolish such rights (*PR,* III, 157). There is need for the passage of economic laws as well as trade laws, so that the employer may be restricted. Kuyper himself advocated such laws as early as 1875. The right of the government to intervene in the life of society is based by Kuyper on article thirty-six of the Belgic Confession, which says that God ordained governments not only in order to restrain the evil in men but that everything may be done in good order. This is the duty of the government, inasmuch as society itself does not have a head; it has independent organization of its own to adjudicate matters of social justice. Hence we need a law-book of civil and economic law as well as one of punitive justice.

Kuyper pleads for organized labor, but since Social-Democracy has revolutionary aims, the government cannot give it the right of organization without undermining its own existence (*GG,* III, 445). Kuyper also favored subsidizing segments of society that were unable to weather an economic upheaval or a natural disaster; he advocated old age pensions, health insurance, accident insurance, etc. (*Ibid.,* 446).

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Having presented the essentials of Kuyper's cultural philosophy, let us now proceed to summarize and evaluate his characteristic contribution.

Kuyper, it appears, is trying to present a philosophy of culture over against Hegel's monistic idealism and the evolutionary materialism of the Naturalists. It is common grace that makes history possible and accounts for the cultural products of mankind. At the same time, common grace is the presupposition of special grace and the very atmosphere and milieu in which a distinctively Calvinistic culture must be developed. Kuyper's heart beats in the doctrine of particular grace, and it finally rules common grace. Kuyper's doctrine of common grace may not be abused by making it the foundation for an uncritical appreciation of the neutral culture of unbelievers. For Kuyper always places common grace under the sway of Christ's kingship. For him it is the milieu for the cultural activity in which the regenerate are engaged, *Pro Rege*. For the church as the body of

Christ holds the center of the stage of history, of which Christ is the Redeemer, not only eschatologically but also presently. In short, Christ's kingship is a present reality (*GG,* II, 341, 348, 355; III, 515, 516, 523).

To my mind, the constant emphasis of Kuyper on the regenerated consciousness which determines man's cultural activities does not constitute a denial of the hegemony of Christ. However, a tension arises from Kuyper's definition of particular grace as extra-temporal, in its essence coming to fruition in eternal salvation, and, the idea that cultural action emanates from common grace. But it ought to be observed that Kuyper never assumes an antithesis between the saved soul and the lost world as the ancient Gnostics and the Barthians of our day. However, there is a sort of polar dualism between the terrain of particular grace, which is spiritual, and that of common grace, which is temporal and visible. Due to this polarity, Kuyper thinks of common grace as originating in the Christ as the mediator of creation, while particular grace must be ascribed to Christ as mediator of redemption. At one time, in the interest of avoiding both the dangers of Anabaptism and the church-state of Rome, Kuyper practically makes common grace independent of particular grace, but, in the end, he shows their mutual interaction and co-operation (*GG,* I, 321; II, 680-84). In the final analysis, there is merely a difference of accent between *Gemeene Gratie* and *Pro Rege,* with respect to the relative value of the two kinds of grace. The dangerous tendencies of common grace are circumscribed by the doctrine of organizational antithesis, which loses its purely practical and assumes a more principal character (cf. Zuidema, *op. cit.,* p. 17). Kuyper never went overboard in pursuit of *das Diesseitige* (the here and now). Common grace was "merely" common grace. Particular grace was for him the one thing necessary.

However, it would seem that Kuyper is putting more weight on the doctrine of common grace than it will bear according to the evidence from Scripture, when he maintains that without it the world would have returned to the void because of the wrath of God, and man would have died physically as well as spiritually on the day of his transgression. Although Kuyper admits that man's existence even after the fall into sin was not threatened, since all God's counsel is sure and Satan could not spoil God's plan, yet he so interprets Genesis 2 that without the intervention of common grace man would have perished under the wrath of God forthwith. This is dangerous speculation. To say that common grace kept the world going at this point is pure phantasy! How can we distinguish grace in God? Does not the Bible teach us throughout that God's plan in Christ, as Kuyper himself admits, determines the course of history. Here is indeed a remnant of Gnosticism, of separating the natural from the spiritual. On this score such scholars as Schilder, S. J. Popma and I. A. Diepenhorst all oppose this construction of the genial master (cf. Zuidema, *op. cit.,* p. 51).

Kuyper's polar dualism between his two kinds of grace is rooted, according to W. H. Velema,[18] in Kuyper's doctrine of creation. Here there are the two lines of the *essentia* of the things, which is eternal in the Logos, and, the *existence* in matter, brought about by creation. In his anthropology Kuyper carries this through by positing an ontic relationship, an analogy with God in the realm of being, which is untouched by sin, and a relationship in the ethical sphere which requires conformity to the will of God. This duality in man of *being* and *nature* corresponds to *essentia* and *existence* in the doctrine of creation and calls for the doctrine of two kinds of grace. This distinction corresponds to the older one of nature and grace. Kuyper seeks to avoid the dualism of Thomism by positing his doctrine of the Mediator of creation, a doctrine which has been rejected by Herman Ridderbos on exegetical grounds,[19] and by K. Schilder on both dogmatical and philological grounds.[20]

Consequently, various corrections of Kuyper have been proposed. Apart from the fact that the Hodges, father and son, as well as McCandlish,[21] have held that all grace is rooted in Christ, certain disciples of Kuyper, as De Graaf and Dooyeweerd, have been contending for some time that common grace is an offshoot of God's gracious love in Christ toward the lost world.[22] Even S. J. Ribberbos, who as a faithful disciple takes on all the critics and wants to maintain the full heritage of Kuyper (*Op. cit.,* pp. 86, 87), is forced to make corrections. He would put emphasis on atonement and would have Christian culture developed out of justification rather than out of sanctification. Christ is the source of common grace in a mediate sense. But the juridical ground of common grace must be distinguished from its source, says Ridderbos, and the former cannot be attached to the cross of Christ (*Op. cit.,* p. 297). But Dr. Velema thinks the distinction between juridical ground and source an amphibious one; hence the protest against Kuyper's common grace doctrine on the ground that it arises too exclusively out of sanctification. At the same time to refuse to seek its justification in the cross of Christ is contradictory (*Op. cit.,* p. 235).

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[18] *De Leer van de Heilige Geest by Abraham Kuyper* (s'Gravenhage, 1957), pp. 225ff.

[19] *Paulus en Jesus* (Kampen, 1952), p. 127.

[20] *Heidelbergsche Catechismus* (Goes, 1947), II, pp. 83-103.

[21] Cf. A. A. Hodge, *Atonement* (Philadelphia, 1907), p. 358, where he quotes McCandlish with approval to the effect that many blessings accrue to the heathen and to the educated citizens of Christian communities through the dispensation of the forbearance of God to the reprobate, which comes through the mediation of Christ. The elder Hodge, father of A. A., maintained that any dispensation of the grace of God to an elect portion of the race would effect the character of all the rest.

[22] S. G. De Graaf, *Christus en de Wereld* (Kampen, 1939), pp. 91-113. H. Dooyeweerd, *Wijsbegeerte der Wetsidee* (Amsterdam, 1933), III, pp. 448ff.

From all of this, it appears that the last word of Kuyper's doctrine of common grace has not yet been spoken. Therefore it would appear to me to be altogether too naive for anyone to confuse the theologoumena of Kuyper with the words of Scripture, as though these were identical. Such an uncritical approach is contrary to the spirit of Calvinism, which is not reactionary but progressive in letting the Word speak on the issues of the day.

Further evaluation of Kuyper's theological conception of culture will appear in the third section of the book which sets forth some tentative conclusions on the Calvinistic concept of culture. Whatever criticisms one may have of Kuyper's theology and its consequent cultural appreciation and promotion, one cannot but be impressed by the epic character of his genial construction of common grace and the antithesis under the kingship of the exalted, risen Lord, who from the right hand of the Father now rules over all things.

CHAPTER IX

SCHILDER: CHRIST, THE KEY TO CULTURE

Klaas Schilder (1890-1952) is the greatest cultural theologian in Reformed circles since the days of Kuyper. He is significant for our study because he differs with Kuyper on the doctrine of common grace and he substitutes the common mandate doctrine in its place. Besides, since Kuyper, Schilder has been the greatest apologist among Dutch Calvinists against every departure from Reformation theology. He has called men back to Calvin's emphasis on the Word and its authority in every area of man's culture. Over against Hegel, who identifies God with history, Schilder maintains that heaven always proclaims the fundamental idea that God and the creature are distinguished. But, on the other hand, he is no less vehement against Kierkegaard and his disciples, Barth, Brunner, Tillich, etc. For they maintain an invincible antithesis between God and man, eternity and time. Over against them he maintains heaven's message that God and man are never separate, that the disjunction between God and man is always on the basis of a deeper conjunction, that the latter determines and relativizes the former.[1] For Schilder there is no antithesis between God and nature, God and history, God and the creature, grace and nature; but the antithesis is within the universe between sin and grace, between Christ, the Restorer of God's world, and the antichrist, who opposes the work of God in history. In opposition to Kierkegaard, who finds no relevance for Christ in the 1900 years of history A.D., Schilder maintains that Christ stands at the center of history and means everything for what followed his exaltation. But naturally the incarnation has no relevance without the work of God in the beginning, namely creation, and God's continuing work in providence. In the Christ of Chalcedon, who was united but not mixed with humanity, the essence of a Christian view of history, and of heaven is concentrated (*Ibid.,* p. 68). History is the framework for God's redemptive work in Christ. Hence God does not condemn history and nature, but through Christ he condemns sin and restores nature and history to their pristine purpose. This is the secret of culture. For Christ, the anointed one, is the second Adam, who is our Substitute to bear the wrath of God for us. He is also our Replacement to fulfill the cultural mandate, given originally to our first father.

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[1] *Wat is de Hemel* (Kampen, 1935), pp. 60, 61, 121.

Since the Christian is one who partakes of the anointing of Christ (Heidelberg Catechism, Lord's Day 12), his concern with culture is inescapable. For, by his anointing, Christ was declared the legitimate heir of the first Adam and commissioned as God's officer of the day to do the work which our first father failed to perform, namely, to glorify God in his handiwork. But Christ was not only empowered, he was also enabled by the Spirit. His anointing was the guarantee of achievement, for he came to reconcile all things to the Father (Col. 1:20). As such Christ does not bring something altogether new, but he restores what was from the beginning, and actually brings to pass what God designed from the first (*Ibid.,* p. 129). Adam as a living soul was indeed the father of human society, but Christ is the *life-giving* spirit, who calls men into his fellowship and fashions them for the fulfillment of the obligation given at creation to the first Adam. The latter must be seen primarily as image-bearer and consequently office-bearer of God, a servant-son who as prophet, priest and king received the cultural mandate to cultivate the ground, to replenish the earth and have dominion over it. This was for man the service of God, true religion. This was the original cosmic order, in which the idea of vocation, of being commissioned and called was determinative for the nature of culture.

But man rebelled and denied his relationship to the Father, becoming an ally of God's enemy, the Devil. As part of the created world of nature man had both consciousness and conscience, was both letter and reader (interpreter) in God's book. He was called to cultivate the good earth and to bring to expression what was implicit, to fruition that was latent, and thus to be a co-worker with God, the creator. For although God pronounced his creation good, it was not a finished product; there was to be an evolution and a development abetted by the cultural activity of man. And only thus the sabbath of God's eternal rest would be ushered in.

Man was also called to self-culture, but not in a personalistic sense of making human personality an end in itself. For this is plain idolatry, since the end-all and be-all of creation is the self-glorification of God. Another result of the sin of Adam is the observable fact that men have not only fallen in love with themselves but they also fall in love with the tools of culture. They abstract the process from the goal, they love the means instead of the end. Thus they all become unprofitable servants. Sin causes separation. All the relationships in the creation have been pulled apart: God and man, man and nature, man and his fellow-man, religion and culture. Disintegration has set in and the beautiful wholeness of the cosmos has been fragmentized; man lost his catholicizing spirit, so that he no longer sees the unity and the purpose of it all. However, sin did not abolish the creative ordinance of God, which governs friend and foe alike, since it is the common obligation of our creaturehood in the covenant of works. Culture is never an individual concern, but it seeks to marshal man as society to the work of God. Paradise was not a romantic, isolated spot to practice religion as a function of the soul, but it was the beginning of the inhabited earth, the beginning of the cultural world. Culture has been defined by Schilder, and translated by John Vriend in what the latter calls a monstrous sentence, as " 'the systematic endeavor toward the aggregate of exploitive labor to be successively produced by the sum-total of human beings who have assumed the task of disclosing the potencies lying dormant in creation, as in the course of history these potencies come within reach, of developing them in compliance with the laws of their individual natures, of placing them at the disposal of all, both near and far, in submission to the norms of God's revealed truth, in order to make the treasures thus acquired serviceable to man as liturgical creature and, subsequently, to place them, together with the now more thoroughly furnished man, at the feet of God, to whom be all praise forevermore.' "[2]

The existence of culture as such in a sinful world should not be ascribed to common grace. Schilder also questions whether we may speak of common grace in the common operation of the Spirit.[3] The restraint of sin, which Schilder does not deny but would supplement with the idea of the restraint of grace, is inherent in time. When this restraint ceases time shall be no more. On the other hand, in Paradise God restrained his spirit from giving full blessedness or else there could not have been a fall. Restraint, then, is characteristic of our temporal existence; however, it does not prove a gracious disposition of God to the world at large. To speak of common grace in a proper setting we should also mention its corollary, the common curse.

In Kuyper's definition of the problem *(probleem-stelling)*, the world appears primarily as object of the curse, with the sabbath as a temporary pause *(katapausis)*, a tempering of the curse. But this approach is too negative for Schilder. One cannot base a God-glorifying culture upon what man *still has*; his *may* is a *must* (ons *mogen* ligt in ons *moeten*). It may, indeed, be very interesting to start with what we have left after sin entered the world, but it does not go to the heart of the matter. For the question of what we *still have* or do not have any more touches our position in the covenant of works. In this covenant man is the office-bearer of God with an original mandate to subdue the earth and to rule over it for God's sake.

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[2] "Christ and Culture," a review of Schilder's *Christus en Cultuur, Torch and Trumpet,* I, 1 (1951), pp. 11, 12, 29.

[3] *Christus en Cultuur* (Franeker, 1935), p. 60.

Schilder calls the mind that reasons from *what we still have* egocentric; it is the lazy servant attitude of having gotten off pretty well after all (*Wat is de Hemel,* p. 286). He urges us to see the whole matter theocentrically and to speak the language of obedient son, "We have *not yet* finished the great task given to us by God" (*Ibid.*). Thus Christ, who is our example, kept reminding the Pharisees, who had the "still have" mentality, of that which had been from the beginning, and imposes that as binding. Christ also pronounces his beatitudes upon people who had "not-yet" attained; they were poor, hungry, miserable, sorrowful, without land, etc. They are not blessed because they *still have* so many good things together with the unbelieving world, but because they were destitute, depending on grace.

Therefore, Schilder reasons, we must see the world as an instrument of God's glorification. Hence prolongation of time after the fall does not imply grace, since God had to prolong time to populate both heaven and hell. Mere prolongation is neither blessing nor curse, but the substratum upon which history can be produced and culture may be developed. So too, the development of nature is not grace but is part of the natural process; it is the result of an inherent power in man given by God with creation. It is the turbulent and impetuous urge within man who himself is becoming, to force the becoming earth to bring forth its fruits for him. The instinct to culture *(colere)* is implanted, but whereas in Paradise it was a God-glorifying activity, after the fall it has become egotistical and self-glorifying, in the spirit of Pallieter.[4] We must see this matter clearly, says Schilder, that *nature-in-time* implies movement and development. To conceive and to bring forth are part of the process of history, and culture is the presupposition of all the works of God. Therefore it is a serious error to designate pure prolongation, the mere fact of cultural activity, as grace (*Chr. and Cult,* p. 63).

There is no grace, let it be clearly understood, in eating and drinking as such, or in the bearing of children per se, nor is there a curse in these things in themselves. But eating and drinking and begetting in faith as advent's-work for God's eternal sabbath is evidence of grace. This is common to those who share in the redeeming work of Christ, which has an effect upon their cultural achievements. But there is no universal grace upon all men (*Ibid.,* p. 64). Likewise, the curse is upon all godless culture *(colere)*, the eating and drinking, the bringing forth from the womb of mother earth without faith. For after the fall the antithesis was inevitable, not in nature, but in the use of nature, namely, culture.

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[4] Cf. Felix Timmerman's *Pallieter* (Amsterdam, n.d.), a novel in which the main character embodies the pagan glorification of the body and its lust for life by running out naked in the spring rains and kissing the ground.

Schilder would, then, have us think eschatologically, with an open eye for the catastrophic event which brings in the sabbath of God. If we see culture in this light, we shall not be surprised to find that culture *even* has meaning for heaven. However, we ought to be surprised if it did not have to work for God's eternal Sabbath. And this view gives us breadth of outlook, but not the breadth of that abuser of the common grace doctrine, the sensualist and Epicurean, who takes what he can of the world and only asks how much and how far he can go without jeopardy to his eternal welfare. The breadth of outlook is the broad, cosmic view of the office-bearer, who sees the whole of time, which calls him to cultural activity, as the preparation for the Sabbath of God (*Wat is de Hemel?,* p. 285).

The Christian should not be satisfied to eat the crumbs falling from the cultural tables of the unregenerate. We should not be "christian" gourmands who rejoice to get their fingers on a "drumstick" of worldly culture. This is a negative, reactionary attitude. We must learn not to talk about common grace without its correlate, common curse (*Ibid.,* p. 287). Both are the retardation of the full blessing and the full curse, in order that the wheat and the chaff together may ripen for the harvest. We narrow the cultural problem too much when we say that we have deserved the curse but we *still have* so much that is good: beautiful nature, a fine symphony, drama and television. When we speak thus we lose sight of the fact that in Paradise both commands and promises were dated, both work-commission and work-material were pointers to the future, namely, to that catastrophic point of time in which the Sabbath of God would be ushered in (*Ibid.,* p. 287). Therefore *grace* is too narrow a term. Paradise lost, Paradise regained, and the long road between are a matter of *commission, command, mandate.* And God does not wrong man when he asks him to perform what he required in the beginning (*Heidelberg Catechism,* L.D. IV). However, this constitutes the awe-inspiring aspect of the cultural problem, for it is the burden of the Lord; man cannot escape or deny this claim of his creator with impunity (*Wat is de Hemel?,* p. 288).

Not only does Schilder reject the term "common grace," but he also would abolish the idea of a "common terrain," which believers are said to possess mutually with unbelievers. For if we speak of the cultural terrain as the terrain of common grace, then it becomes a kind of neutral zone between the contending forces of the world and the church, a place of rest and communal recreation, a sector for general relaxation. The best we can say is that we have a common workshop, the world; but men no longer have a common culture (*Ibid.,* p. 289). It is true, there is a *being together (sunousia)* of all men in this world as a result of the universal humanness of the creature image-bearer of God. For God did not separate the world into two halves after the Fall. The cultural mandate and the cultural urge are still common to all human beings who together form the human race. There is today but one nature, but a twofold use of nature; one material, but a twofold working of it; one territory, but a twofold development of it; one cultural urge, but a twofold cultural striving (*Chr. and Cult.,* p. 76). It is because all work is bound to the laws of nature and because recalcitrant matter is hard to mould according to the will of the artificer and artist that the products of friend and foe in the cultural struggle are so alike.

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Over against the entire construction of Abraham Kuyper and his contemporary disciples, which explains culture on the basis of common grace, Schilder places Christ as the key and clue to culture. In order to make possible the return of the human race to true religion and true culture, two things had to be accomplished. The punitive justice or wrath of God against sin had to be appeased, and, the obedience that God required must be rendered. Christ entered history immediately after the Fall as the Redeemer-Saviour and the Avenger of God's justice. In this double aspect he is Saviour of the world and guarantees a future to cultural achievement. For Christ has purchased and energized a community, his servants, to read anew the marching orders of the human race, issued in Paradise. The agenda which had been engraved in the heart of that original man of culture, Adam, is now taken over by the second Adam. His Word and Spirit are rewriting this agenda upon the hearts of redeemed humanity.

For Christ's sake, therefore, a history of many centuries has been interjected between the two paradises, between the first sin and the definitive curse, not merely for the work of salvation but also for the work of the Redeemer-Judge (*Ibid.,* p. 66). Kuyper regards the church as being dependent on common grace, whereby it has found a place for the sole of its foot in the world. Schilder turns this around and holds that as long as God is gathering the church, the world has a chance to repent (*Wat is de Hemel?,* p. 290).

Christ, according to Schilder, restores culture by producing the true, whole man. In the cultural effete and bankrupt imperial Rome, the little band of Christ-confessors were a wholesome cultural leaven. Culturally considered, Paul as tent-maker and preacher, alone was worth more than a thousand courtiers and courtesans of Nero's corrupt court. The introduction of Christianity was not merely a religious renewal but at the same time the greatest cultural reformation of history. The Protestant Reformation was a resurgence of this cultural renascence. Luther, happily married to his practical Kathryn, giving forth in joyful seriousness in his table talks and creating the German vernacular in his translation of the Bible; Calvin, who demonstrated concretely in a rejuvenated Geneva what Christian culture can accomplish; these are samples of what Schilder means by a Christian culture (*Chr. and Cult,* p. 71). For Luther was not anti-cultural when he spoke of reason as a harlot *(die Hure Vernunft)*; but he was scoring sinful, proud, God-emancipated reason as guilty of spiritual harlotry, much as Hosea calls Israel an adulterous nation. So too the Roman Imperium is called a harlot in the book of Revelation, not because of the persecution of Christians under its aegis, but because of its unwillingness to use its creaturely gifts in the service of the creator. For a harlot is not condemned for her womanly nature, but for using her nature as woman contrary to the divine ordinance for womanhood. So when by reason man knows not God, it is pronounced vanity and such wisdom of the world comes to nought.

With respect to Calvin's contribution Schilder maintains that he differentiated church and state without separating them, and that he taught a living love for the divine calling, since he came to God's recruits with an order-of-the-day that was also cultural. He had learned to understand that precious word of grace, and hence also of culture: "all things are yours, but ye are Christ's, and Christ is God's."

Schilder makes much of the fact that Christ creates new creatures, makes men whole, sound, so that they can once again fulfill their cultural calling in this world. He contends that a Christian family living in a distinctively Christian style is a revelation of healthy power which one looks for in vain in Hollywood, which gives a grievous portrayal of family life culturally. "A Christian laborer, who dares to be himself as Christian, is again a piece of health in an unhistoric, business-like-Americanized world; he is worth more in subdued force than a whole college of science that has not seen God" (*Ibid.,* p. 73). A church weekly that is engaged in spiritual cultivation and keeps principles pure in its locality means more for cultural construction than a gilded stage. A good scriptural meditation giving guidance for life is worth more than seven dramas, inasmuch as the power of the Word is stronger than that of the image, and doctrine is more than sign.

Strictly speaking therefore, positive, creative, cultural construction is accomplished only where God's will is obeyed. The fact that men have the same nature with the same interests does not guarantee a true communion *(koinoonia)*. This can only be achieved when the same nature is directed to a common goal through love for the same basic principles. Hence cultural fellowship *(koinoonia)* is basically a matter of the fellowship of faith (*Ibid.,* p. 75).

But in spite of this striking fact, God in his providence so tempers the effects of the curse and his wrath against sin that it is possible on the basis of our common humanity *(sunousia)* to work on fragments of culture with those who deny God's claim upon them. Christ holds them together, for he has bound Satan, and restrains antichrist. But not only the judgment, but grace also is restrained; therefore nothing is consummated, nothing is fulfilled. The music of both angels and demons is tempered. That there *still is* some culture is due to fact that Satan has not yet been loosed.

Godless culture, so says Schilder, never truly ripens, never reaches consummation. The monster of cultural paralysis is always stalking it. The result is that men fall in love with the tools, producing a film for the sake of the film and producing art for art's sake. The film in our day, instead of being a medium of education and nurture, has become a means of infatuation and of the blinding of the eyes. At last the antichrist will come, and be permitted by God through inventions and technical means to perform wonders; but true culture will come to an end when God's tempering providence no longer restrains men (*Ibid.*, p. 84, 85). "The culture of the antichrist will leave in its wake only torsos, when the horizon is aflame with the fire of God's judgment, which may still be seen at the brink of the sea of glass" (*Ibid.*, p. 85). But the Bible, which symbolizes perfection with the number seven, tells us that the antichrist will only come to half that number. This is symbolic of the fact that his program shall be interrupted, that the anti-christian cultural fair *(kermis)* in honor of the *Homo Ludens* (man as player) shall result in a truncated pyramid.

Over against this dismal picture of a truncated pyramid there stands the initially, inasfar as the Word rules, norm-true structure of the church and of the kingdom of heaven. As often as the people of Israel forgot that they were church, and that the church in every struggle, including the cultural one, could only conquer through faith, they stood in tears along with their royal house at the sight of a stump of a once stately tree. The exile was not merely a visitation for spiritual apostasy but also for degeneration in a cultural sense, for both Jerusalem and its beautiful temple were destroyed. The people, who had wanted to compete culturally with the heathen, gave way to despair and saw no future. But the prophets told them to stop their weeping, for from the believing cut-down trunk a Sprout would issue, the Christ as Good Shepherd, who provides in every need, even culturally.

In Christ the mighty reality of a healthy, goal-true structure of harmonious culture, with norm-fast style, appears. Here God by special grace makes dead men come to life, and makes the man of God completely fitted to every good work (*Ibid.*, pp. 87, 88). For Christ is the only true source of culture, and he establishes the communion *(koinoonia)* which mutually binds individuals together, which is necessary for teleologically directed cultural construction (*Ibid.,* p. 88).

This entire interpretation of culture is not a contest of arguments but one of the decision of faith. For it is basically true that we can know all things, not merely spiritual matters, only by faith, not by sight or experience.

Some of the consequences of this biblical position may now be summarily listed. Strictly speaking, there is no culture as such *("de" cultuur).* Just as there is no "pure" reason *(reine Vernunft),* there is no such thing as pure culture *(reine Kultur).* This is simply an imaginary entity. Although nature is one, the cultural striving of mankind is two; due to sin and the curse, the duality exists and we must recognize the antithesis (*Ibid.,* p. 89). In the world of sin, which is the stage for the tragic drama of secularization, only cultural fragments are produced, because the basic unity has been lost and the sinner is the great sectarian and schismatic. But Christians also produce only fragments due to the retardation of grace and of power, due to the persecution of the world, which denies the Christ confessors a place to work, and, due to the individual and communal sin of negligence. In spite of this fragmentary character of our work, we may not refuse service on pain of treason.

A second consequence is that, in our discourse concerning the Christian and culture, we may not proceed on the fiction of "culture as such," since this is an abstraction and there is no world-soul, world-reason *(logos).* And Christians must avoid the formation of groups which fail to recognize God's moral law, which comes from above and binds their actions. Each must serve God in his own calling. Calling determines what is our particular task; our aspirations may not be divorced from inspiration. "To establish communion in our common humanity *(koinoonia in sunousia)* as members of the mystical body of Christ, that is Christian culture" (*Ibid.,* p. 93).

Thirdly, the question arises whether there is room for abstention from cultural endeavor. Indeed, since the cultural mandate comes to all men this would be tantamount to a renunciation of Christ, would constitute voluntary poverty, and is sin before God. For every creature of God is good and is sanctified by the Word (God talking to us) and by prayer (our talking to God). Renunciation of cultural participation for its own sake is always sinful; however, it may be a necessary evil due to the exigencies of war. The Christian has a double load to carry because of the faithless sons of the Father who seek their own pleasure and refuse to work in his vineyard. Schilder uses the example of the worldling who hands out his two quarters for a poor film, while believers are toiling to save a quarter for the great mission task. They are also called to establish Christian churches, schools, universities, publishing houses, sanatoria, etc. Hence the sons who are faithful are overworked because their faithless brothers refuse the Father their service. Thus there may be Christian heroism in this negative (ascetic) attitude toward culture if believers seek to fulfill the will of God in training for spiritual warfare. "A Christian people, supporting its own schools for higher education, sending out missionaries and caring for its poor, which were left them by Christ, thus saving them from the clutches of state-absolutism (that pioneer of the antichrist), doing a thousand other works of divine obligation, and primarily because of this not able, for example, to project an imposing Christian stage, let us suppose that were possible, or to achieve a broad Christian organization of aesthetic and artistic character, such a people is nevertheless a heroic communion" (*Ibid.*, p. 96). Such abstention is self-denial for the sake of the kingdom (cf. Matt. 19:12 where Jesus says that there are those "that made themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven's sake").

Fourthly, it is uncritical to speak of the cultural question as that of common grace, for we are not merely permitted but commanded to cultivate and subdue the earth. We ought not to call the "vestiges" of the gifts of creation "grace," and we may not accept the Arminian designation of the "natural light" as common grace *(commune gratia).* In this connection it ought to be pointed out that Schilder, in his exposition of the Heidelberg Catechism, has produced the evidence that the Fathers of Dordt and Augustine did not use "grace" to designate what man has by nature. But Pelagius acknowledged as grace that which was given at creation as an increated capacity of human nature. The Pelagians, says Schilder, even called the law "grace" because it helps us not to sin. And in order to confound *true grace,* namely, the saving grace of God in Christ, Pelagians spoke of man's rational nature, the gift of free will, the law and doctrine as grace. Augustine, on the other hand, wanted to reserve the term grace for God's works of reparation (recreation), since this was the language of Scripture.[5]

Schilder would have us distinguish carefully between the "natural light" and *its use,* which Kuyper, in his judgment, did not always do in his epic on common grace. On Kuyper's view the "mission" is narrowed down to "permission"; we are concerned with what is left to man and are in danger of falling into cultural optimism. For nature has not been *given* to man to dispose of at will, but has been placed at our service in our service of God, just as the owner places a ship under command of the captain to work for him in the shipping business. In the case of culture our *may* is our *must,* capacity and taste do not determine the norm, but all are commanded to be perfect, wholly human (*Chr. and Cult.,* pp. 97-101).

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[5] *Heidelbergsche Catechismus,* IV (Goes, 1951), pp. 31-35.

Fifthly, the church, of which Christ is the head, must be held in great reverence culturally. For in Christ, God, the great Recapitulator of history, will make up the grand total (cf. Eph. 1:10; Col. 1:20). The church may never become a center of culture, "a thinly disguised university" (Vriend, *op. cit.,* p. 29), but it must be the greatest indirect cultural force (Schilder, *op. cit.,* p. 112).

Furthermore, in Christian culture the person has value only in community with Christ, but this is not a dictatorship in which one becomes a mass-man losing his personality. Christ in his inimitable *Canon of Culture,* the Sermon on the Mount, addresses the individual. One that has been hewn out of the Rock, which is Christ, will distinguish himself without separation (I Cor. 2), and as salt of the earth will be saved by the great Housekeeper in times of cultural decadence. The paradox of Scripture that forbids believers to avoid the sinners of the world (I Cor. 5:10) and yet calls on them to go forth out of Babylon (Rev. 18:4) is resolved when one remembers that Christians have a duty in the world although they are not of the world. As was indicated earlier, to condemn Babylon, the harlot, is not to condemn the common humanity *(sunousia)* on the basis of which her harlotry is practiced. The tension that arises from our continuous conflict with "this" world (the world that lies in sin and exists in the evil one) and the command never to go out of "the" world, is the same that obtains between our lot of being in contact with men *(sunousia)* and our duty to fellowship *(koinoonia)* (*Ibid.,* p. 114).

Finally, the Christian cultural philosopher will have to reason more logically from the concept of calling (idea of office) in order that he may not be intoxicated with cultural optimism or stupified with cultural asceticism. Nay, even the pious man may not take his fling, but he must fulfill his calling, he must be conscious of being office-bearer with Christ, prophet, priest and king, living by the light of Word revelation. For nature teaches nothing, it is enigmatic, unless illumined by the Word. It was Calvin especially, who, through his disciples Ursinus and Olevianus, has taught us to understand how the struggle of sin and grace, of obedience and disobedience, is paramount in culture (*Ibid.,* p. 117).[6] For we have a Christ, who as king, observes not only how we pray, but also how we handle the spade, the hammer, the book and needle, the brush and whatever instrument we may work with, to draw out of the world what God has put into it. Men recognize the need for eschatological preaching and theology, but what we need desperately is eschatological culture. For the world is no longer a garden of God (Eden) but a place to work, an arena to struggle, a building terrain. The place to meet God is not in a secret spot where the romantically disposed soul practices religion as a province apart from life. But God's forum is his work terrain, as big as the world; and in it is our workshop, factory, and steaming oven, study or studio, every area where the man of God, completely furnished unto every good work, is faithfully fulfilling his divine calling.

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[6] *Heidelberg Catechism,* Lord's Day XII, QA 32, "But why are you called a Christian? Because I am a member of Christ by faith, and thus a partaker of His anointing, that I may confess His Name, present myself a living sacrifice of thankfulness to Him, and with a free and good conscience fight against sin and the devil in this life, and hereafter reign with Him eternally over all creatures" cf. *Psalter Hymnal* (Grand Rapids, 1934), liturgical section, p. 27.

Such obedience in the cultural process activated by faith has its reward in the fact that God's co-workers are formed and corrected by God's sin-restraining power, so that they may reach the fulness of their sonship. And even the unwilling ones are made into God's instruments; they all carry each one his stone for the great building of God's glory.

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Schilder would evaluate the cultural process on the basis of its eschatological-pedagogical worth. Pedagogically, the worker is qualified by the tensions in the cultural process; hence the process may not be pronounced useless. The spiritual values shall remain even after the trial-pieces of God's co-workers have been melted down in the fire of the last day. This brings us to the other term, eschatology, taken by Schilder in its literal sense of that which pertains to the last things.[7] The real value of culture does not pertain to the things produced, as pieces of art and modern inventions, but in preparing, through the fluctuating tension of the process, the arena for Christ and the antichrist. And through it all God is pursuing his purpose in achieving his greatest piece of art – namely, the triumph of the last one of his elect over the world, in the power of Jesus Christ (*Ibid.,* p. 305).

In this connection it must be observed that Schilder repudiates the conception of Kuyper that the glory of the nations shall enter the new Jerusalem. He does this on exegetical grounds, first of all, by citing Dr. S. Greijdanus' commentary on Revelation (21:24) to the effect that this process takes place in the present dispensation, when those who repent among the noble of the earth bring their cultural treasures to the feet of Christ, which will have its effect in eternity (*Ibid.,* p. 291-92). Secondly, the idea that a germ of culture should be transmitted is rejected on the basis that Kuyper is basing his argument on the analogy of the body that is raised in the resurrection (cf. I Cor. 15). But this, too, according to Prof. F. W.

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[7] *Wat is de Hemel,* p. 67.

Grosheide, commentator on First Corinthians, is not permissible, for it is not possible to think of the natural body that was buried as the seed of the spiritual body that is raised. Besides, there is a world of difference between the adventures of a *corpse* and those of *cultural products!* Kuyper has indulged in a dangerous analogy of comparing incomparables *(metabasis eis allo genos)* (*Ibid.,* pp. 293-94). Rather than think of this phrase, "and the kings of the earth shall bring their glory into it" (Rev. 24:21), as final act in the activities of the "not-yet-heavenly-Jerusalem" or the opening act of the new state of affairs in the heavenly Jerusalem, Schilder believes this phrase is descriptive of a phase in the process of the coming and development of God's Jerusalem in time (*Ibid.,* p. 294).

One further argument of Schilder against the idea that kings carry anything into the new Jerusalem is the fact that saints will be passive in the process of the resurrection and that God brings them in by his grace catastrophically. And, besides, what could man wish to carry along, for his body is radically changed. Men and women as such will have no existence in heaven since they shall be as the angels of God. To what purpose then, would the riches of man's erotic culture serve? After the world goes through the fire of judgment, what *germs* will there be? Hence Schilder pronounces this lyricism of Kuyper's epic to be passé.

The crucial concept in Schilder's philosophy of history is that of the catastrophic point of time, in which a new state of affairs is ushered in, not only at the climax of history, in the denouement of judgment, but already in the creation period (*Ibid.,* pp. 64, 67, 298, et al.). Heaven is God's world, but, if we see it as a totally other world, we have not done justice to the incarnation, which from the center of history controls its end and is involved in the beginning. Now in this world, which was one of rectitude in the beginning, perfection would not have come by evolutionary process but only by the catastrophic leap, a sudden change in a point of time. This procedure of God was imbedded in the structure of history, says Schilder (*Ibid.,* p. 64). Indeed, says he, at this point we are afraid of phantasy, but whatever may be drawn from Scripture by good, sound deduction we ought to accept as true with all its implications.

Schilder reasons that the world of heaven, of perfection and completeness to which man was created, is not a new creation but simply a purified, renewed, and perfected creation. The second step in the argument is that Christ and Paul tell us that sexuality and vegetation will pass away since there will be no marriage in heaven and no meats for the belly. But just these two elements seem constitutive of human existence. Therefore, and this is the conclusion, the change from a sexual-vegetative life to one in which these elements do not appear must be acute, catastrophic. Even in the creation process, Schilder avers, this technique was followed, so that something new was added every day, transcending and transforming what had preceded. On the basis of the first creative act of calling forth matter out of nothing, God, by the shock method, produced a new wonder on every succeeding morning of the creation-week (*Ibid.*, p. 299). One day was not coupled to the next by evolutionary graduality but attached itself to the results of the former convulsively and eruptively. The seeming chaos (that which was not yet ordered) was transformed into cosmos; the earth and the waters were separated and, on each succeeding morning, something new was added by which the previously created world was made serviceable to its law of life. So man, created on the sixth day, was called to labor with all his might and to love with all his heart, until God would come as a thief in the night to usher in his eternal Sabbath catastrophically and eruptively, an eternal morning of fruition and perfection.

Sin has not spoiled God's methods of operation. Then why should we see things differently when the great evening of the day of the Lord approaches, and the world-week must retreat for the eternal morning? When, therefore, the Lord makes all things new, let no one grieve over the loss of cultural products! Was it a loss when the soup of liquid and dust were separated into seas and dry land? To ask is to answer, Schilder affirms.

We must beware of Humanistic axiology in speaking of culture. When suns, moons and stars fall as blossoms out of the sky, what will *germs* of culture mean? And does not the *Logos* ever play before the face of God? And does not God rejoice in the work of his hands? To be sure, in this world, all things are for the church, but surely this is not the ultimate, since whole cultures have existed and passed away without having affected the church. The church is only penultimate. The real purpose of culture ought to be remembered, since it is God who makes history and has made all things for himself, for all is Christ's and Christ is God's (*Ibid.*, pp. 300-7).

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In trying to evaluate Schilder's contribution to Calvinistic culture, it is difficult to be thoroughly objective. One is tempted to say with John Vriend that "except for certain ideas on common grace I am in hearty agreement with the basic thrust of the argument" (*Op. cit.*, p. 29). No doubt, many will agree that our point of departure should be the concept of man as office-bearer of God, called and qualified to bring this world by his cultivation to fruition. This is the heart of the matter, the *abc* of a Christian philosophy of history.

It would be a tragic matter if, on the basis of Schilder's ecclesiastical disposition, a very debatable question of church polity, the Reformed community should fail to take cognizance of the brilliant and radically Calvinistic contribution of this poetically gifted prophet, thus throwing out the baby with the bath. It is more than time to study with open mind and eager anticipation the truly massive and epic works of this valiant apologist for the faith once delivered to the saints.

However, one should not be unmindful of what others have written in criticism of Schilder's thesis. A. A. Van Ruler objects to Schilder's basic thesis by saying that we ought to see the world primarily as an object of curse and not as an instrument of God's self-glorification. Furthermore, under the influence of Kierkegaard and Barth, Van Ruler wants to keep an antithesis between God and the world, not merely between God and sin. With these strictures one cannot agree, if nurtured on the Calvinistic interpretation of Scripture. The accusation, that Christ's work of atonement becomes peripheral due to Schilder's emphasis on Christ's fulfillment of the covenant of works as the great cultural man, does not hold water when one remembers the massive three volume work of Schilder on the sufferings of Christ, in which he discussed Christ's endurance of the catastrophic curse. A man cannot restate the totality of his position in every connection. In the final analysis, Van Ruler summarizes his objections into one point when he says that Schilder identifies the soteriological with the culturally theoretical.[8] By this he means that Schilder sees religion as culture, and particular grace as continuous creation. He does, however, credit Schilder with a sound Christological emphasis.

It may be granted that Schilder sometimes creates the impression that the whole of religion consists in the restoration of man to his cultural service of God, but this is an exaggeration. And it is exactly the great service of Schilder that he causes us to see that religion is not a question of the soul apart with God, but of doing the will of the Father in our everyday calling. At this point Schilder gives great credit to Kuyper. He acknowledges that it is Kuyper who has taught his disciples to say "yes" to the created universe and to man's cultural calling, meanwhile turning their backs upon every sickly ideal of piety. If Schilder is right in analyzing man's original relationship to God as one of convenantal responsibility, then man's restoration to the Father through Christ can be nothing short of this goal of being a co-worker with God in every sphere of his cultural activity.

Schilder's rejection of Kuyper's explanation of human culture on the basis of common grace, whereby the latter sets up a kind of secondary goal in history, ought to be applauded. Schilder characterizes Kuyper's idea that without common grace the world would have perished immediately as abstraction and speculation. This is also commendable!

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[8] A. A. Van Ruler, *Kuyper's Idee Eener Christelyke Cultuur* (Nijkerk, n.d.), p. 15.

However, it ought to be clear that Schilder has not been able to avoid the error which he signalized in his genial master and against which he warns us. To conclude that the first world would have entered upon its stage of perfection by a catastrophic denouement is speculation just as much as Kuyper's idea that without common grace the world would have fallen apart. For in both cases projections are made which go beyond man's knowledge of the counsel of God for only that is possible which God has decreed.[9] Moreover, Schilder is guilty of abstract reasoning when he will grant that God loves all creatureliness, but denies that there is any favor of God toward non-elect sinners. Creatureliness is a pure abstraction and as such can nowhere be found in the world of men.[10] And it constitutes sheer exegetical violence to deny that Matt. 5:44, 45 and its parallel passage speak of the love of God toward all men.[11]

On the other hand, commendation is in order for Schilder's warning against the doctrine of the terrain of common grace, as if this offered a neutral field of operation between Christian and non-Christian. Dr. S. J. Ridderbos may be right in his dissertation that Kuyper never intended a sort of neutral zone with his common grace-terrain.[12] However, it is not convincing when the author reasons that, through a full acknowledgment of grace *(gratie)*, that which is mutual between believers and unbelievers comes into sharper focus and hence the expression "terrain of common grace" need not raise apprehensions (*Ibid.*, p. 312). But this argumentation has validity only in the atmosphere of Kuyperian speculation. The assumption is that the world would have been destroyed but for the common grace of God. If one believes, on the other hand, that God's eternal purpose to glorify himself in and through the salvation of sinners in Christ is the motivation of history, and kept the world going after the Fall; if one believes that the image of God, inner light, reason, morality, etc., are gifts of nature, part of man's ontological equipment, part of the structure of his humanity, then the idea of a terrain of common grace becomes meaningless. Besides, it is a truly dangerous idea, because it is popularly used by cultural optimists to break down the antithesis. And, as Dr. Vollenhoven observed, there is the great danger that men think of a duality in their own being, living at one time in the realm of common and at another time in that of special grace. This would be nothing less than a return to the Roman Catholic position concerning nature and grace.[13] Therefore it would be much better not to speak of two terrains but of the objects of common grace and of special grace.

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[9] Cf. E. E. Zetterholm, "The Inescapable Cross," *Torch and Trumpet*, VII, 5 (Oct. 1957), pp. 17-19.

[10] Cornelius Van Til, *Common Grace* (Philadelphia, 1947), pp. 24-33.

[11] John Murray, "Common Grace," *Westminster Theological Journal*, V (Nov. 1942), pp. 1-28.

[12] *Theologische Cultuurbeschouwing van Abraham Kuyper*, (Kampen, 1947), p. 312.

No doubt Dr. Ridderbos (*Op. cit.,* p. 312) is correct when he holds that Schilder has misunderstood Kuyper's claim that Calvinism was unable to develop an art style of its own because religion in its higher development sheds its dress of art. The fact is, as Ridderbos points out, that Kuyper is using the term "religion" in the loose sense of "worship," that which pertains to the cultic exercises. It is true that Kuyper is not clear on this point (*Calvinism,* pp. 145-55), but Kuyper did make it abundantly clear that he would countenance no divorce between religion and art, and demonstrates with some passion the effect of Calvinism on Art in his own country (*Ibid.,* passim).

Concerning the Schilderian construction of history as pure prolongation, as the neutral substratum for the tempering of both grace and wrath, it would seem that this is another example of abstract reasoning. As Berkouwer pointed out in his study on providence, Schilder is here proceeding from the eternal counsel and the final end, instead of God's speaking to men in his historic relationships.[14] But what are the facts of the Gospel and of the revelation of God to his people in history? This God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son. It is certainly true that God in his sovereignty and according to his counsel continues the world, but the whole thrust of the Gospel is the love of God for his people, whom he saves in and through Jesus Christ. Berkouwer is right, that the prolongation of time, the development of history, is not to be construed as a balance between the development of blessing and curse, of grace and wrath. In that sense, at least, we ought not to speak of the equal ultimacy of the decrees.[15]

However, it ought to be clearly understood that those who hold to an equal ultimacy of the decrees of election and reprobation do not deny the centrality of the doctrine of redemption in Scripture; but they are concerned to maintain that reprobation is equally a matter of eternal and sovereign decree as election, that men are ultimately either saved or not saved because of the fact that God willed it and there is no antecedent to the will of God.[16] The eternal woe of sinners is not due, in the final analysis, to their own free choices without reference to the foreordination of God. At this point Prof. Berkouwer[17] and some of his disciples deviate from Calvin, who believed, on the basis of Scripture (Prov. 16:4; Rom. 9:21-22), that some men are created in order that they should reveal the justice of God in their reprobation. For Calvin especially emphasizes the sovereignty of God in reprobation (*Ibid.,* III, 22, 11; 23, 1).

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[13] D. H. TH. Vollenhoven, *Het Calvinisme En De Reformatie Der Wijsbegeerte* (Amsterdam, 1933), p. 47.

[14] G. C. Berkouwer, *Dogmatische Studien-De Voorzienigheid Gods* (Kampen, 1950), pp. 83ff.

[15] G. C. Berkouwer, *ibid.,* pp. 200-58.

[16] John Calvin, *Institutes,* III, 23, 5.

Finally, what is to be one's verdict on the vexing question of the eternal value of culture? It would seem that Schilder has effectively disqualified Kuyper's construction, namely, that the *germ* of our present culture shall enter the new Jerusalem, Dr. S. J. Ridderbos to the contrary notwithstanding. This he has done both on exegetical and dogmatical grounds. It is true, of course, as Ridderbos projects Kuyper's position, that culture has an eternal significance (*Op. cit.,* p. 313). But which culture? *Es gibt kein reine cultur!* Does anyone wish to defend the position that the *germs* of any part of the godless culture of this present evil world are going to enter the holy city, in which the tabernacle of God shall be with men? What does "eternal significance" mean? It would seem that Schilder is on safer exegetical grounds here than Kuyper.

All in all, then, it appears that Klaas Schilder has done the church of Jesus Christ a great service by presenting his conception of culture as emanating from the mandate given in Paradise. The Calvinistic community, in particular, ought to thank God for this clarion voice calling it to the fulfillment of the cultural mandate as the service of God, whose co-workers we are by grace.

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[17] G. C. Berkouwer, *ibid.,* pp. 207 ff.; J. Daane, "The Principle of the Equal Ultimacy of Election and Reprobation," *The Reformed Journal,* Nov., 1953.

PART THREE

Basic Considerations toward a Definition

CHAPTER X

THE AUTHORITY OF SCRIPTURE IN CALVINISTIC CULTURE

Culture, as we have seen, is the expression of a people's religion in the conquest of nature and in the fulfillment of their calling upon earth. All religion is dependent on revelation and lives by authority. Historically, Christianity has accepted the special revelation of God as inscriptured in the Bible as the final authority. In this formulation the act of revealing is distinguished from the record of revelation, but, for all practical purposes, the church throughout history has accepted the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testament as the Word of the living God. Calvinism, also in its cultural aspects, proposes to continue in this historic position, not willing to accept the church, or the religious consciousness, or any other substitute in place of the Word.

The Calvinist maintains that the Word of God has final and absolute authority, and is clear and sufficient in all matters of faith and conduct. It constitutes the final reference point for man's thinking, willing, acting, loving, and hating, for his culture as well as his cultus. A godly culture seeks to know and execute the will of God, who is creator and Lord. The question of the disciples to Jesus, "Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life" (John 6:68), is applicable here. How would man, who is finite, know the purpose of his existence without the revelation of the creator? Since culture is a matter of ends and meanings, and these in turn depend upon origins and nature, how would man ever come to a true understanding of himself, the world, and his place in the cosmos, without revelation. Job truly asked the one great question, "Where shall wisdom be found?" (28:28). God is the source of all wisdom and knowledge. The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom (Prov. 9:10). The most disquieting, tormenting question of our Western culture is exactly this concern for the meaning of life, meaning through which man becomes aware of the totality of his existence.

The very crisis of our Western culture, according to Tillich, is the anxiety of meaninglessness which besets it. This is the "anxiety about loss of ultimate concern, of a meaning which gives meaning to all meanings. This anxiety is aroused by the loss of a spiritual center, of an answer, however symbolic and indirect, to the question of the meaning of existence."[1] For meaning implies wholeness and purpose. As long as man deals only with the particulars, with the many phenomena, his mind is not at rest; for there is within him an urge, a strong impulse, for seeing the unity behind the diversity, to find the one among the many. Brunner goes so far as to say that "meaning is therefore a fundamental factor of culture and civilization. Nay, one can even say that culture is materialization of meaning. Culture is the creation of units which exist only for the spirit."[2] But Professor Dooyweerd exceeds him when he maintains that meaning is the mode of all created being. "*Meaning* is the *being* of all that has been *created* and the nature even of selfhood. It has a *religious root* and a *divine origin*."[3]

There is especially one aspect of man's culture that deals with meanings, and is a reflection upon all that man seeks to accomplish. We refer to philosophy. For the proper character of philosophic thought, which can never be disregarded with impunity, "is theoretical thought directed to the *totality of meaning* of our temporal cosmos" (Dooyweerd, *op. cit.,* p. 4) . However, this calls for critical self-reflection, which was recognized by the ancients. It was expressed in the motto: "Know Thyself," written above the portals of Aristotle's school of philosophy. This critical self-reflection is important because philosophy is always carried on by a self that transcends the process of theoretical thought. The "I" engaged in philosophic thought (cultural enterprise) must rise above the process in which it is engaged and yet be involved in the totality of meaning. There is, therefore, no neutral, purely theoretical, starting point in philosophy and culture as a whole. Man's attempt to find the totality of meaning does not arise from self-sufficient scientific thought but from the religious depths of the heart, which cannot be neutral. This starting point of philosophy and of all culture is referred to by Dooyeweerd as the Archimedean point (*Op. cit.,* pp. 4-21) . The term is derived from Archimedes, a Greek physicist (ca. 250 B.C.) , who reputedly stated that if he were given a *pou sto,* a place to stand outside of the earth, he would move the earth. No man can jump out of his own skin; that is, no one can get away from the subjectivity of the self. Yet man needs an observation point above the diversity within the cosmos, a point that transcends theoretical thought itself.

Such an Archimedean point, according to Professor Dooyeweerd and his school of Christian philosophy, is found in the heart, for out of it are the issues of life (Prov. 4:23). The heart forms the concentration point of man's being; it is the religious root of his existence. It transcends all of the separate, vital functions through which it expresses itself, as for example, feeling, thought, faith. By the act of regeneration through the Spirit of God, the heart knows the truth and is set free from its apostasy. Thus the whole of a man's life is re-directed. Of this Paul jubilantly testifies, "Wherefrom if any man is in Christ, he is a new creature" (II Cor. 5:17). But "It is not possible to give a scientific conceptual definition of the heart, because as the center of our whole existence, the heart is the deepest (created) presupposition of our thinking" (Spier, *op. cit.,* p. 16). It is through faith that man receives the revelation of God at this point. The believer humbly accepts what God reveals in his Word concerning the true nature of man, his origin and his destiny. Also man's covenantal relationship to his creator, religion, which determines his culture, is a matter of revelation. This relationship and its revelation transcend theoretical insight, for they constitute the presupposition of all man's philosophical speculation and cultural striving. And the reason there can be no neutrality is the fact that man in his heart is either bound to God and his Word or to some idol, a false god projected by man's imagination.

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[1] Paul Tillich, *The Courage to Be* (New Haven, 1952), p. 47.

[2] Emil Brunner, *Christianity and Civilization* (New York, 1948), I, p. 61.

[3] H. Dooyeweerd, *A New Critique of Theoretical Thought* (Philadelphia, 1955), pp. 4-21, of which a popular introduction has been written by J. M. Spier, tr. by D. H. Freeman, *"An Introduction to Christian Philosophy"* (Philadelphia, 1954), cf. pp. 1-24. Also cf. K. J. Popma, "Het Uitgangspunt van de Wijsbegeerte der Wetsidee," in *De Reformatie van het Calvinisticsh Denken,* ed. by C. P. Boodt ('S Gravenhage, 1939), pp. 7-33.

It is, furthermore, the contention of the Calvinist that what has here been affirmed applies not only to himself, but is equally true of the non-Christian in his cultural striving. But since his heart does not belong to Christ and does not share in his anointing,[4] he tries to shut himself off from the revelation of God. As a consequence he does not know the Truth, which makes men free (John 8:32). Therefore the apostate heart of the unbeliever seeks peace and security in some aspect of the created world, which is then deified and worshipped. Such a deification of the powers of nature took place among the Canaanites, while the Greeks deified the cultural powers of man in their society of gods on Mount Olympus. Today man deifies his own reason and power through the worship of the great god, Science. The tragic part, from the point of view of critical self-appraisal, is the fact that non-Christian culture in its philosophy refuses to acknowledge its religious starting point. This unwillingness to consider the limits of its own philosophy and culture portrays the uncritical nature of all non-Christian, immanentistic philosophy.[5] For non-Christian thought begins by deifying some aspect of reality, namely, in contemporary culture, man's reasoning power. Thus, modern man, by absolutizing scientific thought, the will to power or the courage to be, turns his heart to apostasy instead of finding repose in Christ, who gives the weary rest (Matt. 11:28). This is characteristic of all immanence (that which resides within) philosophy and culture; it is lost within this round globe, as Calvin affirmed of Plato.

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[4] Cf. *Heidelberg Catechism,* Lord's Day 12, q. 32.

[5] H. Dooyeweerd, *Transcendental Problems of Philosophic Thought* (Grand Rapids, 1948), which constitutes an inquiry into the transcendental conditions of philosophy. Dooyeweerd maintains that "an unprejudiced theory is excluded by the nature of theoretical thought itself."

The other aspect of meaning concerns the end or goal for which an act is initiated and a life is lived. Calvinistic culture points above and beyond itself. The plowing of a field and sowing of the same to reap a crop of wheat, the forging of a hammer and the planing of a board for the building of a house, both have meaning for the satisfaction of man's physical need. And it must be granted that much of the multivarious activity of man tends toward the self-preservation and propagation of the race.[6] But this is only the biological substratum of man's spiritual existence which yearns for security beyond time, since the spirit of man is restless until it finds rest in God, as Augustine observed. And it is at this point that purpose and wholeness of meaning merge, namely, in the service of God. This is man's chief end and joy, unto which he is called in Christ, the Renewer of creation, and of culture. For the Son of God has been anointed to be the Christ, the second Adam, and as such is the Renewer of all things. In Him all things are reconciled to God so that man's culture again becomes a panegyric to God (cf. Spier, *op. cit.,* p. 19). This Christian solution of the problem of meaning once gave stability and homogeneity to the culture of the West, but the rejection of this view has thrown Western culture into a tailspin from which it has not yet emerged. But the Calvinistic solution is the only real alternative to the philosophy of despair advocated by Heidegger and Sartre, and the dehumanized culture of Nazism and Communism, the advocates of political totalitarianism. For if God is dead, as Nietzsche so confidently affirmed, then the *Courage to Be,* advocated by Paul Tillich, is worse than whistling in the dark, since the terrors that cause men's hearts to fail with fear are not imaginary but real. It is a truly fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God (Heb. 10:31). However, man is not willing to pay the price that must be paid to gain the fullness of meaning and the totality for which he yearns, namely, repentance. Modern man refuses to believe the Gospel, which is God's authoritative revelation and interpretation, giving the true perspective of culture as meaning.

Modern non-Christian culture, then, is critical of the Scriptures, since, according to its standard, they merely embody a human tradition. Its own charter of freedom, which extols the sovereignty of human personality and bows before the autonomy of the mind of man, forbids any other course. His assumption that nothing human is beyond the range of man's criticism is, no doubt, valid; but believers do not accept the implied assumption that the Christian Scriptures are a document of merely human origin. To do so would be to surrender the whole of Christian supernaturalism, which spells the end of Christianity itself. However, it must be noted as a sad reflection on historic Christianity, that many who call themselves disciples of Christ deny the relevance of Scripture, making religious experience the final court of appeal. In a sense, this is true of all pietistic movements which turn away from the world in Anabaptistic negation, among whom K. Barth also finds a place. But even among those who believe in the present reality of the kingdom as the essence of the Gospel, the Bible has to a great extent no relevance. Such are not only the old liberals who claimed that the experience of two world wars has chastened them and has purged the leaven of their evolutionary faith in the perfectibility of man, but also a host of newer liberals and semi-Barthians as Caillet,[7] who puts the authority in the church. Then there are such scholars as Tillich, Kroner, Meland, the Niebuhrs, none of whom take the Word of God seriously as authoritative for man as cultural being. To most of the latter group Scripture speaks only symbolically, so that it never has a literal message. Besides, they posit a great divide between God and man as creature. Scripture, however, pictures the creature as having fellowship with his God. It speaks of sin as the divider by which the earth was cursed and man became a stranger and exile from God.

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[6] Cf. Brunner, *op. cit.,* I, pp. 62-67.

The Calvinist, on the other hand, does not take the narrow view that Scripture merely reveals the way of salvation from sin. For him the Bible is also his source-book as a cultural creature. It delineates the guiding principles for his whole being. In Scripture the origin, nature, and goal of the world, man's habitat, and of man as image-bearer of God, are set forth. God's Word, then, is not merely a corrective, but it is regulative; its basic principles must become constitutive elements in a Calvinistic cultural philosophy. All of which does not mean, of course, that the Calvinist would substitute the Bible for the facts of science and history. If one would devote himself to politics or economics, science or art, he must naturally study whatever facts are available and wherever they are available. However, such a student in whatever field he works must orient his study to the Word, which is normative and gives man the ultimate truth about every fact. The Calvinist believes with his spiritual father, Calvin, that God reveals himself in nature and history and in the very constitution of man himself (*Institutes,* I, 5, 6). However, the true meaning of this revelation is not correctly understood without the spectacles of the Word of God (*Ibid.,* I, 6, 14). This necessity is due to the objective as well as the subjective effects of sin, namely, the curse upon the earth and the darkness that settled upon the human mind. As a consequence, there is need for new light (special revelation) and new insight (enlightenment through the Spirit). Indeed, God communicated his will to man before the fall into sin, so that God's program was known to our first parents. But sin consisted of the rebellion of man against the authoritative revelation of God concerning the nature of events and things. In his apostasy man accepted the interpretation of the devil instead. Now the Bible maintains that the natural man dwells in darkness with respect to his origin, calling, and destiny. Hence the Word is given to present fallen man with the true picture concerning himself and his relationship to God. Man must learn to realize who he was by virtue of creation, who he became through the fall, and who he may become by grace. In the covenantal relationship which we call religion, man has received a cultural mandate. This was never abrogated or abolished. It is, consequently, still valid for covenant-breakers who live in rebellion, as well as for sinner-saints, who now love the Lord and serve him. Beyond that, there is the missionary-mandate (the great commission) for all those who have been restored to the Father, the calling to preach the Gospel to all nations, teaching them to observe all Christ's commandments.

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[7] *The Christian Approach to Culture* (New York, 1953), pp. 33, 46, 62, *et al.*

Let no one, then, suppose that the Calvinist wants to use the Bible as a textbook for science, art, politics or any other facet of man's variegated culture. The prophet Isaiah tells us that the farmer learns to prepare his soil under the direct instruction of his God (Isa. 28:24-29), while David confesses that God teaches his hands to war (Ps. 18:34). Man does not need a special revelation for acquiring the arts of agriculture or of war, the techniques of science and art; these things are learned from nature through the inspiration of the Spirit. Moses testifies that God through his Spirit had given special talents of skillful workmanship in preparing the tabernacle in the wilderness of Bezaleel and Aholiab, who were in charge of a special group of wise-hearted men, "in whom Jehovah hath put wisdom and understanding to know how to work all the work for the service of the sanctuary, according to all that Jehovah hath commanded" (Ex. 35:30—36:8). And so it is with all of man's cultural acumen; God's gifts are not restricted to the elect but are also given to the children of Cain. In fact, the seed of Cain excelled in cultural achievement at a very early time in the history of mankind, when Lamech's sons initiated the godless culture that filled the earth with violence before the flood. In short, to split the atom one does not go to the Bible for scientific information or technique.

On the other hand, that the Bible is not a text-book for science must not be misunderstood. It does not mean that Scripture has nothing to say with respect to science or that it has no authority in matters pertaining to culture in general. For man's whole cultural enterprise must receive its meaning from God, who must reveal that meaning to men. It is God who has in his eternal counsel preinterpreted or destined the meaning of every created thing. Now it is the cultural task of man to think God's thoughts after him as Augustine already observed, whereby man fulfills his office of prophet, priest, and king. And the Calvinist believes that a truly scientific procedure is intelligible only on the Christian presupposition of a sovereign creator, who has revealed himself to his creature. The principles of interpretation at work in science and in all culture either presuppose the God who has revealed himself in his Word as Creator, Preserver and final Judge of the world, or they deny, directly or by implication, the scriptural God-concept. Granted that science deals with facts, which no one would deny, yet these cannot be separated from their interpretation. It is impossible to think or discuss a fact without thinking its relationship to some universal and some principle of interpretation. The real question, then, in every philosophy of history and of culture, is what kind of universal can give the best account of the facts that are discovered and analyzed. That is to say, by what universal do the facts become most meaningful to man as a religious-cultural creature? And here we are back to the same proposition discussed above, namely, that of the totality of meaning and the problem of purpose in culture.

It ought to be unequivocally affirmed that since Christianity is an historical religion it is not indifferent to the facts of science and culture. The Calvinist believer and scholar does not find peace in a compartmentalized existence; he seeks integration in education and life. He has never allowed the validity of the two-level theory of truth, in which what is religiously true may not be true scientifically. His intellectual integrity does not permit him to go along with the liberal masquerade which denies the resurrection of Jesus from the grave as a physical, biological fact while insisting on celebrating Easter with the church of God, meanwhile spiritualizing the meaning of the resurrection. Indeed, the resurrection of Jesus is a question of fact, a supernatural fact, that is, a miracle. At this point one cannot dodge or equivocate with impunity! For one cannot define miracle honestly without relation to natural law. The classic definition of C. W. Hodge that a miracle is an event in the external world wrought by the immediate power of God is to the point. Dr. Machen used to say to his students that a miracle presupposed both the existence of the God of Theism and the regular order of nature, involving the doctrines of creation and providence. In a chance universe a miracle would be a contradiction, and the modernist consequently reduces miracle to one chance event in a universe dominated by chance.[8]

The Bible, for the Calvinist, has both historical and normative authority. He believes, first of all, that the Bible is true in its statements of fact; it tells the truth in the matters it records about God and his relationship to this world and to men. It truly records the facts of man's redemption, which constitutes the history of God's dealings with his covenant people. The whole of biblical Archeaology and Evidences would have to be marshalled to confirm this point. That is clearly impossible within the limited scope of this book, but orthodox biblical scholars have vindicated the historical character of the Bible.[9] The Calvinist, with the apostle Paul, takes his stand on the historical character of Christianity, which can only be ascertained from Scripture. For Paul affirmed concerning the resurrection of Jesus that if Christ hath not been raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins. Then they also that are fallen asleep in Christ have perished. If we have only hoped in Christ in this life, we are of all men most pitiable (I Cor. 15:17-19). This is directly contradicted not merely by the extreme critics but also by such convinced evolutionists as Prof. Albright in his brilliant work, *From the Stone Age to Christianity*. His position is that of rational empiricism in dealing with historical problems. For him the supernaturalism of the Pentateuch constitutes an obstacle to accepting its historical veracity. This is the basic presupposition of evolutionary Naturalism, which denies the intervention of God in the affairs of men and of the cosmos. Concerning the miracles of the New Testament he says " 'Here the historian has no right to deny what he cannot disprove. He has a perfect right to unveil clear examples of charlatenry, of credulity, or of folklore, but in the presence of authentic mysteries his duty is to stop and not attempt to cross the threshold into a world where he has no right of citizenship.' "[10] With respect to the question of the occurrence of a miracle Dr. Albright is a confessed agnostic, since miracles belong presumably in a world where the scientist has no citizenship; he can neither affirm nor deny their factuality on the basis of his scientism. But the question may well be asked: "How can the historian unveil spurious miracles, if the whole domain of the supernatural lies outside of his province? . . . The inconsistency of this position is shown also by the preposterous role which it assigns the historian. The historian may study the cusps in the molar teeth of the gorilla and compare them with the teeth of *pithecanthropus erectus* with a view to bridging the gap between man and the lower animals. These lie within the sphere of the historical. But 'the historian cannot control the details of Jesus' birth and resurrection and has thus no right to pass judgment on their historicity.' What could be more tragically pathetic, if it were true? The meagre remains of Java-man are historical evidence. They prove that he lived and died; and the evolutionist tells us that he died 500,000 years ago. But the empty tomb and the angels and the resurrection appearances and the ascension from Olivet, which establish the truth of those wonderful words of Jesus which were uttered at the tomb of Lazarus, 'I am the resurrection and the life,' are not historical. The historian cannot deal with them. What, we repeat, could be more pathetic? What greater fiasco can we think of than this? The greatest and most momentous events in human history, if true, are declared to be non-historical. The historian may discuss the question whether Sargon was the son of Tiglath-pileser. But he may not discuss the question whether Jesus was born of a virgin. He may investigate the legend of the Seven Sleepers of Ephesus; he may investigate the question whether Frederick Barbarossa is slumbering in some cavern in the mountains and will yet awake to deliver the Germans in their hour of peril. But the far weightier question whether Jesus of Nazareth was declared to be the Son of God with power by the resurrection from the dead — that question he must leave unanswered. What a humiliating role this assigns to the historian. The supreme facts of history are not historical!" (*Ibid.*, pp. 249, 250).

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[8] The entire proceding discussion on fact and presupposition is a reproduction of what I have learned as a student of Apologetics at Westminster Theological Seminary and may be found in the mimeographed Class Notes on *Apologetics* and *Evidences,* written and taught by Prof. C. Van Til.

[9] Cf. O. T. Allis, *The Five Books of Moses* (Philadelphia, 1943); R. D. Wilson, *A Scientific Investigation of the Old Testament* (Philadelphia, 1926); James Orr, *The Christian View of God and the World,* a reprint (Grand Rapids, 1954); G. H. Clark, *A Christian View of Men and Things* (Grand Rapids, 1952); C. Van Til, *The Defense of the Faith* (Philadelphia, 1955).

[10] Quoted by O. T. Allis in *The Five Books of Moses* (Philadelphia, 1943), p. 248, from Albright's *From the Stone Age to Christianity,* p. 300.

This rather lengthy quotation illustrates the anti-scriptural presupposition of men like Albright in interpreting facts of revelation. Dr. Allis calls it pathetic, but the Bible, which is the Word of God, speaks of such procedure by which God is negated as folly. For the Calvinist the facts of revelation, special revelation as found in the Holy Scriptures, are the prime facts which furnish the believer the presupposition of his entire culture. This presupposition of faith will be discussed more fully in the next chapter, but, without the objective revelation from God which is an authoritative interpretation of the created world, man would be in darkness and ignorance concerning his true destiny and the meaning of history.

However, a word of caution is in order here. The liberals would accuse the conservatives of being literalists to the point of absurdity. But there are principles for the proper interpretation of Scripture, recognized by reputable scholars, which were introduced by Calvin and his followers. Simply because conservatives believe the Bible to be the inspired Word of God does not mean that they can no longer distinguish the style of poetry, symbolism in prophecy, or the use of figures of speech. There is a great difference, for example, in the plain prose account of the crossing of the Red Sea in chapter fourteen of Exodus and its poetic portrayal in the following chapter. In the former chapter God is said to have turned the waters back with a strong east wind, while the latter poetically speaks of God blowing the waters on a heap with the breath of his nostrils. This is poetic imagery, for God has no nostrils or bodily appearance. The plain, didactic prose of the Lord Jesus in teaching his disciples concerning the second advent differs greatly from the symbolism of Revelation twenty, where the serpent is pictured as being bound by an angel who carried a chain. Now both angels and devils are spiritual creatures and the slithering serpent being hog-tied with a logging chain is imagery. This is picture language that no sober biblical scholar interprets literally. However, the plain sense is, that God tells his church for their comfort that the ragings of Satan are under his control (witness the book of Job). For liberal scholars to suggest that if one takes the plain narrative prose of Scripture literally he must also interpret figures of speech, poetic and prophetic symbols literally, is the rankest folly. Furthermore, when the liberal of either old or new school actually wants to use the Bible to substantiate a point in ethics, for example, he takes the Bible literally, whether he accepts or rejects its authority as the Word of God.

But, after having said all this, the fact must be faced that some of the facts of revelation have no normative significance, even though they are historically trustworthy. We believe that the Bible correctly relates the sins of the saints, the words of the devil, and gives us a record of the civil, ceremonial laws that obtained in the theocracy. It tells us that Jacob, David, and Solomon practiced polygamy. But that is not normative for our lives. The Bible plainly teaches the monogamous character of marriage.[11] Although much of the legislation of the law and a good deal of the prophets pertained to the economy of Israel, that does not mean that the entire Old Testament is passé for the New Testament believer. Christ accepted the authority of Law, Prophets, and Psalms, quoting them indifferently as the Word of God, which cannot be broken. However, although Christ did not abrogate the law, it is clear from Paul's writings and the epistle to the Hebrews that the sacrificial system of the Old Dispensation, the time of shadows, had passed away. But the abiding moral law and the religious principles of the Old Testament are applied by the New Testament writers. An example of such an abiding principle may be deduced from the message of Jehovah to Jehoshaphat, king of Judah, who had made an alliance with wicked Ahab. Jehovah's prophet met the king upon his return to Jerusalem with these words, "Shouldest thou help the wicked, and love them that hate Jehovah? for this thing wrath is upon thee from before Jehovah" (II Chron. 19:2). Another example is found in the imprecatory Psalms, in which the form is clearly applicable only to the old dispensation, but the substance is essential to the total biblical message. For the Bible is all of a piece when it calls us to the great spiritual warfare between darkness and light, the seed of the Serpent and that the Woman, the world and the church. However, in the Old Dispensation Samuel hewed Agag to pieces before the face of the Lord (I Sam. 15:33) and Elijah slew the prophets of Baal at the word of Jehovah (I Kings 18:36), in obedience to the law of Moses, which prescribed the death penalty for idolators. But when Christ came into the world he told Peter to put up the sword. He answered Pilate that his kingdom was not of this world, but that all those who were of the truth would hear his voice; hence he gave his servants the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. And Paul's description of the panoply of God, although it describes the physical armour, yet is spiritual in content since the warrior of God fights with the truth, faith, salvation, Gospel, and the Word of God (Eph. 6:10-16).

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[11] Cf. John Murray, *Principles of Conduct,* (Grand Rapids, 1957), ch. III.

The warfare, therefore, is no longer physical, with flesh and blood as in the case of David, who fought the uncircumcised heathen, but it is spiritual, "against the spiritual hosts of wickedness in high places" (Eph. 6:12). "For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh (for the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh, but mighty before God to the casting down of strongholds); casting down imaginations, and every high thing that is exalted against the knowledge of God, and bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ; and being in readiness to avenge all disobedience, when your obedience shall be made full" (II Cor. 10:3-6). Now the substance of the imprecatory Psalms is the joy of God's people over the defeat of God's enemies, and their hatred against the workers of iniquity.[12] And those who deprecate the warlike terminology in speaking of the Christian's relationship to the world are in danger of losing sight of the great warfare that exists between the two kingdoms. But more of that in chapter thirteen.

This, then is the sum, that Calvinists hold the Bible to be the Word of God and trustworthy as a record of events. Furthermore, it is the authoritative interpretation of reality, the created world, of man and his destiny, and the meaning of history. And the Word of

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[12] Cf. Johannes G. Vos, "The Ethical Problem of the Imprecatory Psalms" in *Westminster Theological Journal,* IV, 2 (May, 1942), pp. 123-38.

God is the only revelation of the way of salvation from sin through the vicarious, atoning death of Christ. It is normative for faith and conduct. It contains both the cultural mandate for mankind and the missionary mandate for the church. It does not commit the believer to the pre-Copernican theory of the solar system, for when the Bible speaks of the sun rising and setting, it speaks in ordinary parlance which is still used by the most sophisticated modern, but everyone recognizes that this does not presume to be scientifically accurate. The Bible is primarily a religious book, but, as was intimated above, this does not make its pronouncements in the sphere of science superfluous. Its truths are not irrelevant to the discoveries of science, for all truth is one. It is the cultural (religious) task of man as God's image-bearer to harmonize the separate truths of the sciences, so that man as prophet may think God's thoughts after him, and as priest may adore the wisdom of the creator, and as king man may produce a culture that reflects the glory of God.

CHAPTER XI

THE MOTIVATION OF FAITH IN CALVINISTIC CULTURE

For a proper understanding of the Calvinistic concept of culture, we must now consider the role of faith. It is quite common to suppose that there are two ways of finding God.[1] On the one hand there is the way of reason, employed by the Greeks, which gives us natural theology, and, on the other hand, there is the way of faith, which came to us from the Hebrews and gave us their sacred Scriptures. Christianity, then, is supposed to be a blend of the two, which finds expression in Christian theology. However, Christianity, on the basis of biblical authority, maintains that man cannot come to God without faith (Heb. 11:7) and all that is not out of faith is sin (Rom. 14:23). Whatever men, therefore, may achieve by reason, they do not find the living God, creator of the world, and Father of the Lord Jesus Christ. Whatever gods men may "find" by reason or create by their imagination are simply caricatures, they are idols.

Over against the position of the philosophers of religion, Calvin maintained that man cannot come to the knowledge of God as creator (natural theology) without the light of the Scriptures (*Inst.,* I, 6). Christ in speaking with the Samaritan woman maintained that every religion except that of the Jews was false (John 4:22) and that sacred oracles were necessary for the right apprehension of the true God. "For, since the human mind is unstable, through its imbecility to attain any knowledge of God without assistance of his sacred Word, all mankind, except the Jews, as they sought God without the Word, must necessarily have been wandering in vanity and error" (*Ibid.,* I, 6, par. 4). In other words, the first part of the Christian creed in which the universal church confesses its faith in God the Father, Almighty, maker of heaven and earth, is not a piece of natural theology. It is part of the knowledge of faith, for as Christians we know the creator, not, primarily from the creation, but from his Word. It is part of the *Credo.* And faith is not the conclusion of a process of rationalization. It is not the result of empirical experimentation, or the emotional response to a mystic experience. But faith is the response to the divine testimony, the evidence of things not seen. But to say that faith transcends the sphere of the rational (the heart has reasons that the mind knows not of) does not mean that faith is irrational, or that it is a jump in the dark. Nor does its inability to resolve seeming discrepancies in connection with the most transcendent mysteries of Christian doctrine invalidate the genuine nature of faith. Indeed, the mysteries of the trinity and the incarnation teach us that God dwells in a light unapproachable (I Tim. 6:16); consequently, the believer accepts these mysteries in adoring wonder. The demand, that every revelation must be reconcilable to human rationality is, therefore, inconsistent with the nature of faith,[2] and with the nature of reason rightly considered. With respect to the witness of Scripture, it comes as an absolute and final testimony of God to man. We ought to allow, it seems, that God alone is an adequate witness to himself.

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[1] John A. Hutchison, *Faith, Reason and Existence* (New York, 1956), Chapter IV.

Now faith is the response of man to this objective witness. It is the subjective avenue by which the testimony of God becomes effective in man, the creature. And this is the very nature of religion. True religion is revelational of necessity, since God is the source of man's being and the ground of his existence. In other words, because man is image-bearer of God, standing in the relation to him of dependent childship, since man is essentially a religious being, he cannot live except by faith. Therefore, to place faith in opposition to reason constitutes a false antithesis, for both faith and the analytical function, which we call reason, are aspects of man as creature. All men function analytically (reason), and all men also function pistically (in faith). Faith is simply a function, the highest in scale, no doubt, of man as creature. With his heart man either believes or disbelieves, but he is a believing creature even in his disbelief. It is the same distinction that we apply to man as moral creature; whether he be holy (moral) or unholy (immoral), man is distinguished from the animal, which is amoral. All men, then, live by faith; either they believe in the true God and live by faith in the Son of God, or, they turn to a caricature, an idol, which Isaiah scornfully describes (Isa. 40). Man uses his analytical power (reason) to justify his basic commitment of faith.

To accuse those who would make faith primary in man's relationship to God of being skeptical of reason is pure nonsense. To say that this position, sometimes called *fideism,* denies all rational categories to religion and therefore has only one alternative, namely, silence, is pure misunderstanding, if not propaganda.[3] For when Luther spoke of *Die Hure Vernunft* (the Harlot Reason) he did not thereby negate or depreciate the value of rational categories in religion, but he repudiated the prostitution of man's reason to deny its maker and to oppose God. Reason becomes a harlot inasmuch as she uses her God-given power contrary to God's law for her being, just as a woman prostituting her body contrary to the law of womanhood and of matrimony and of motherhood is called a harlot. Roger Hazelton, to whom Hutchison makes reference in denying autonomy to faith, has a better understanding of Luther's position.[4]

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[2] For a discussion of the nature of faith as response to divine testimony cf. John Murray, "The Attestation of Faith, *The Infallible Word* (Philadelphia, 1947), pp. 6ff.

[3] Cf. Hutchison, *op. cit.,* p. 99.

Much misunderstanding concerning faith and reason is due to the fact that reason is not seen in its proper perspective as one of the functions of man as creature, namely, the analytical, but it is given an objective, supertemporal status, and is thus deified in the Greek fashion. This is the process of hypostatization, the elevation of one aspect of man's being out of its framework and making it the final court of appeal. Actually, however, man's analytical function is but one of many, since man also functions among others in the biological, social, psychological, economic, aesthetic, moral, and pistical modalities.[5] And the last, since it unites man with that which transcends time and space, is the determinative function. That is to say, every man in his various functions is determined by his relationship to God; he either lives by faith in the true God or he turns away in apostasy, which constitutes a negative functioning of his *pistical* nature. Whereas the primitives turned to idols of wood and stone, or worshipped the heavenly bodies, modern man in his apostasy creates gods in his own image; he turns to the worship of mammon, science, beauty, power, etc.

However, the position here presented is that there is no culture without a presupposition, since man is a religious being. There is no such thing as *Voraussetzungslosigkeit,* that is, the postulate that the scientist must have no presuppositions.[6] In this sense neutrality is altogether impossible; it does not exist. Every man, as cultural agent, whether he be a philosopher or artist, agriculturist or architect, lives by faith, which determines his whole being and mode of life. Sometimes that faith is, indeed, merely the conforming to mass mores and traditions, as in tribal religion, the American way of life, or the dead orthodoxy of many churches. If a man does not choose the Christian faith that Jesus Christ, God's Son, cleanseth from all sins, then he must choose an alternative metaphysics, for, "The metaphysical dimension of the mind never remains empty, but must always have a content" (*Op. cit.,* p. 24). The assumption that neutrality in this matter is possible is a dangerous delusion, since neutrality itself, by begging the question, is a kind of sceptical metaphysics. Usually when the Christian God-concept with its spiritual emphasis is denied, a mechanistic, materialistic metaphysics is substituted, and that under the guise of metaphysical neutrality. Says Brunner, "What presented itself as metaphysical neutrality was, as a matter of fact, blunt naturalism, not to say stupid materialism; a pre-conceived axiom of the unity and uniformity of all phenomena. Of course, this is metaphysics, metaphysics of the worst type, instead of true openness of mind not prejudicing the character of Being, we have here a metaphysical dogma of the uniformity of all Being, which proved to be genuinely harmful in the field of *Geisteswissenschaften* (spiritual sciences, v.t.) and contributed no little to the sad condition of the present world. I only mention a naturalistic sociology which abolished the notion of justice and introduced, instead, the principle of the survival of the fittest" (*Ibid.,* II, p. 25).

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[4] *Renewing the Mind* (New York, 1949), p. 85, where the author quotes Luther, "The understanding, through faith, receives life from faith; that which is dead is made alive again."

[5] The term "modality" is imported from the Christian philosophy of Herman Dooyeweerd, a Christian philosopher, who denominates the various meaningful aspects of creation, subject to the same set of laws (e.g., numbers, feelings, thoughts, symbols, etc.) as modal aspects of reality, or simply, modalities.

[6] Emil Brunner, *Christianity and Civilization* Vol. II (New York, 1949), p. 23.

So then it is man as religious being that is called to culture. Faith, therefore, is the religious *a priori* of man's whole cultural enterprise, and particularly of his scientific quest. The conflict in culture is not between faith and culture, religion and reason. But, since every culture is founded on religious faith, the conflict is one of divergent faiths. Dr. Conant, therefore, is putting the cart before the horse, when he contends that the establishment of separate Christian schools (parochial or otherwise) is a divisive force in the nation.[7] Christian schools are simply a recognition of the divergence of faith and a realistic solution, from the viewpoint of the Calvinist, to the actual situation. Of course, from the viewpoint of the secularists in education it is bad, since they lose part of their influence, and the American-way-of-life religion loses a battle in the conflict.

In speaking of faith as the inevitable presupposition of culture, I do not merely have in mind the formal aspect of faith *(pistis),* which is the necessary hypothesis of all scientific endeavor.[8] For although it is true that all science presupposes faith in itself, in the accuracy of its observations, in the reliability of sense perception and thought processes, this formal aspect of faith is not now the main issue. The psychological aspect of faith is clear enough and is almost universally recognized today. One simply cannot escape faith as part of man's self-consciousness as rational, moral, cultural image-bearer standing in covenantal relationship to God. However, the real issue is whether man on his part maintains the covenant or has broken it and is living in enmity against God. The biblical presupposition, accepted by faith by the Christian church, is that man has fallen away into infidelity and apostasy. He now needs restoration to God, which can only be achieved in and through the Christ of God, who has fulfilled the law that man had broken. In other words, the natural man, apart from the grace of God, does not stand in the truth, but he is mouthing the lies of the devil while functioning under the truth of God, which he still knows after a fashion (Rom. 1:18ff.). But not only has man fallen from his high estate through sin, the cosmos is now also abnormal, due to the curse of God against sin. But in Christ, who is the great Reconciler of all things, and who as second Adam has stepped into the breach, the world is renewed and man becomes a new creature. Thus those who by faith participate in Christ are restored to their office, of prophet, priest, and king, setting them free from the dominion of the devil and ready to fulfill the mandate of God. This renewal of culture begins here, but will be consummated in the new heaven and new earth in which a proper habitat for the redeemed is being prepared (John 14:1-6).

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[7] James B. Conant, cf. Address to the American Association of School Administrators, Boston, April, 1952, quoted by Edward Heerema, "Are Our Christian Schools a Divisive Force in a Democratic Society?" A published address, delivered in Chicago, August 13, 1952, before the convention of the National Union of Christian Schools.

[8] A. Kuyper, *Principles of Sacred Theology* (Grand Rapids, 1957), pp. 125, 146.

This presupposition of faith is nothing else than the revelation of God to his servants through Jesus Christ. By faith men live according to the Word. This does not make faith autonomous as against reason, but the Word has autonomy. No function of man can ever be the final reference point of interpretation, but faith as a function (the highest) of the heart accepts God's Word as absolute authority and rule of life.

The faith versus reason antithesis, then, is not tenable, for man's analytical capacity always remains a servant of his faith, which moves him to love God or to rebellion. However, the idea that faith must be subjected to reason is a deep-seated one. Also Hutchison, who posits the primacy of faith (*Op. cit.,* p. 99), finally subjects faith to the criticism of reason by subscribing to rational theology. As a matter of fact he confounds the issue in one sentence when he holds "that all religious propositions are propositions of faith, and that reason enters the scene as the means by which faith is (1) communicated, *tested,* evaluated. . . . These beliefs are then interpreted, *criticized,* and *tested by reason*" (*Op. cit.,* pp. 130, 132 – italics added). In the final analysis, as with all liberals, old and new, the absolute authority of truth, of what is valid in religion, what God may or may not do or say or be, is determined by man's finite reason instead of being determined by the self-revelation of the triune God. The real issue, of course, goes back to the question whether a direct, divinely inspired revelation is possible or not. But the upshot is that man instead of God is the final referent, the primary interpreter of reality. This constitutes Arminianism and Pelagianism in theology, and Naturalism in philosophy. Man in his finitude has the temerity to call God to account; God must appear before a tribunal that is common to both God and man. God is subject to some other good, truth, or beauty to which he must conform. This the Calvinist cannot tolerate, either in his theology or his culture. He is unalterably and unequivocally committed to the proposition that God is law-giver, that Christ is the Truth, and that man must bow to the sovereign law of God in all things.

The fact that man must use his analytical function (reason) to interpret the Word does not invalidate the authority of the latter, nor does it transfer its autonomy to man's reason. However, "reason" must remain a servant of the consecrated heart that bows before the Word made flesh. But man in his rebellion against God has proclaimed himself emancipated in his culture. This is especially true in science, for here the dominion over nature seems to say that man is his own law-giver. This attitude of rebellion in culture has not always been equally apparent in Western culture. Sacred history, indeed, informs us that there have been periods of self-conscious apostasy for which the wrath of God was revealed from heaven in judgment. This happened in the Flood (Gen. 6), at Babel in the confusion of tongues (Gen. 11), the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, of Pharaoh and his hosts, of the Canaanites for their abominations (Deut. 18). Furthermore, God's own people were thus visited for their disobedience and unbelief, Babylon was destroyed because of its cultural pride, as were Tyre and Sidon (cf. all the prophets, major and minor for enlargement upon this theme).

Since the advent of Christianity God's name has been acknowledged in the West, but with the Renaissance there was a self-conscious turning away from the authority of the Word to a glorification of man, either in seeking to establish the sovereignty of human personality or the omnipotence of science. The crisis in Western culture is due, to a great extent, to the incompatibility of these two motifs, and the fact that the latter threatens to swallow up the former; the result of this is that man has no meaning in a machine dominated world. Nietzsche saw the decline of the West even before Spengler *(Untergang des Abendlandes)* when he officiously proclaimed God dead. This was his way of saying that the God of the Bible was not relevant for Western culture, that men did not live out of their faith in God. Since that day the atheistic Existentialists (Heidegger and Sartre, c.s.) have been fulminating about the fact that man in his finitude is not able to transcend the ambiguities of human existence, that there is no final referent beside man, no final Interpreter of reality except man. This is the Existentialist predicament; he is lost within his round globe. This is the cause of the sense of despair and meaninglessness of which Tillich speaks so eloquently and futilely.[9] For a man-created and man-centered world has no ultimate meaning, and Existentialism is irrationalistic and subjectivistic, for man's calling is made self-culture, self-creation and self-fulfillment.[10] Reality is completely subjectivized within the individual and man who no longer has a positive relation to God and is being progressively dehumanized until he lands in despair.[11]

This despair and sense of frustration of modern man is the result of alienation from God, for the creature needs a refuge for the soul, and an anchor of hope. The predicament of modern man, then, is not due to his creatureliness, as the Existentialists and the Barthians would have it, but due to his apostasy. His faith function is working negatively; he has turned away from the living God to idols. But since modern science threatens man's undoing, he is crying with Micah, "Ye have taken away my gods which I made, and what have I more?" (Judg. 18:24) . To deny the relevance of faith for culture is to fall into a false dualism, separating nature from grace as does Scholastic theology. For Scholasticism, also the repristinated brand of modern Catholic philosophy, reason reigns in the sphere of the natural, but faith holds sway in the spiritual realm. Actually this implies that religion is not relevant for the whole of life, for a disjunction appears between reason and faith, between culture and religion. Thus, philosophy, which is one of the most important ingredients of any culture, becomes an independent, wholly rational enterprise. As Gilson describes it, " 'Based on Human reason, owing all its truth to the self-evidence of its principles and the accuracy of its deductions, it reaches an accord with faith spontaneously and without having to deviate in any way from its own proper path.' . . . The trouble with this view is that it is compartmental and divisive. It juxtaposes what ought to be integrated. It separates the religious and the scientific in man."[12]

Over against this view of contemporary Catholic Scholasticism, Professor Dooyeweerd of the Free University of Amsterdam, the only Calvinistic university in Europe, rejects the dogma of the autonomy of reason in any sphere of man's existence, maintaining that all scientific thought has a hidden, deeper rootage in the heart of man, namely, faith. Dooyeweerd introduces a method of transcendental criticism of philosophic thought, and on the basis of its inner structure concludes purely theoretic thought to be impossible. All man's thinking stems from a religious, non-theoretic source.[13]

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[9] Cf. previous chapter on reality as meaning.

[10] S. U. Zuidema, "Kierkegaard" and "Sartre" in *Denkers Van Deze Tijd* (Franeker, n.d.), 2nd printing, pp. 20, 281.

[11] Paul Tillich, *The Courage To Be* (New Haven, 1952), pp. 139, 140.

[12] Cf. H. Stob, "The Word of God and Philosophy," in *The Word of God and the Reformed Faith* (Grand Rapids, 1942), p. 106.

[13] *Transcendental Problems of Philosophic Thought* (Grand Rapids, 1948), cf. entire tract of 77 pages for the argument.

Dr. Dooyeweerd holds that it is a form of idolatry to make theoretic thought, or the aesthetic sense, or the economic aspect of life the self-sufficient point of departure for philosophy and all of culture, for it deifies one aspect of reality. Such a procedure, furthermore, is uncritical for it proceeds on the assumption of the self-sufficiency of theoretic thought or some other aspect of sublunar reality, and does not penetrate to its own inevitable presuppositions. It does not realize that it proceeds to build upon a religious, non-theoretic *apriori* and therefore remains imprisoned in uncritical dogmatism. For dogmatism is not the affirmation of truth, whether received by faith or ascertained by science, but such an affirmation without a critical understanding of one's presuppositions, without realizing that all one's affirmations are religiously oriented and faith-bounded. The dogmatist is one who supposes himself to be neutral and all other men prejudiced; he supposes that he is making purely scientific affirmations while the rest of mankind suffers from a faith fetish.

In summary, then, the belief that culture, or any part of it, can be achieved in a neutral terrain, apart from one's religious commitment, is erroneous. For with respect to Christ no man can be neutral! As the ascended Lord of Glory he claims all of life and as the Restorer of the Father's world he calls all men to their cultural task. Those who by grace through faith have returned to the Shepherd of their souls are willing to say with Paul, "it is no longer I that live, but Christ liveth in men and that life which I now live in the flesh, I live in faith, the faith which is in the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me" (Gal. 2:20).

Over against this man of faith (Abnormalist) stands the Normalist (cf. Kuyper, *Calvinism,* p. 132) who wants to apply the methods of empirical science to religion, which implies a denial of the finality of Christianity from the start. This methodology implies a naturalistic metaphysics, namely, the conception that the world is ultimate, that we need not posit a supernatural Person to explain man's existence and nature, and that man can handle the situation both theoretically and practically. The modernist not only denies the supernatural act, miracle, but by implication, at least, denies the supernatural *fact,* God. Miracle, of course, does not fit into the modern man's conception of scientific law, but it belongs to the very warp and woof of Christianity, as all its Apologists aver. Christ, the Son of God, is not only Immanuel, the ultimate in theophany, he is also *the Prophet,* the personification of prophecy and the Truth personified; but he is moreover the consummation of the principle of miracle; he is the supreme miracle in Person, God Incarnate. Now all of this is denied, if not expressly, yet by implication, in the presupposition of non-Christian science and philosophy. For by denying the doctrine of creation it assumes the ultimacy of the universe; by denying to God the power of personal direction over the laws of nature, it constitutes these laws as ultimate; by denying the authority of the Word of revelation as the true interpretation of man's existence and the meaning of the universe, it proclaims the autonomy of the mind of man and makes man the final referent of interpretation. By assuming brute fact, that is, the idea that no fact has meaning until interpreted by the mind of man, God as final interpreter and creator of the facts is denied. Now Calvinism contends that God by his eternal counsel gives meaning to all things, and that the Christian by faith in the revelation of God receives and understands that meaning, which must be expressed in his culture. Paul pictures the meaninglessness of non-Christian culture when he says that it is foolishness in the sight of God because man by his wisdom knew not God (I Cor. 1:21). The very possibility of meaningful predication and communication in culture in a sin-corrupted world is on the assumption of the truth of the Christian presupposition that God is creator of heaven and earth, and that Christ is the Redeemer and Reconciler of all things.

CHAPTER XII

CALVINISTIC CULTURE AND THE ANTITHESIS

As a result of the presupposition of faith, there now is a division in mankind. This is called in Calvinistic circles the antithesis. Faith, which is a gift of God through the regenerating power of the Holy Spirit, is the wedge that divides humanity. Augustine saw the City of God in this world as a work of God's grace in the hearts and lives of men as opposed to the kingdom of this world, which arises out of an apostate faith of rebellious humanity. A. Kuyper in his *Stone Lectures* speaks of the opposition of the Normalist to the Abnormalist in the field of science, between whom there is an inevitable and uncompromising conflict based on the difference in human consciousness. Faith supersedes the common human consciousness, but not our common humanity as image-bearers of God, so that all things in heaven and earth are interpreted through the eyes of faith as God-created, God-sustained, God-defined, and God-glorifying facts. As Kuyper maintains, the consciousness of sin, the certainty of faith, the testimony of the Holy Spirit, are all "constituent elements in the consciousness of every Calvinist."[1] The late Klaas Schilder takes his point of departure in the covenant which God made with man. Those who keep the covenant are fulfilling their cultural calling also, but the breakers of the covenant become disobedient to the cultural mandate, since they do not serve God but self. In this chapter an attempt will be made to arrive at the biblical concept of the opposition between the *civitas dei* (kingdom of God) and the *civitas terrena* (kingdom of this world).

According to Existentialism the antithesis is vertical, that is, between God and man, as creature. Man as creature is placed under the judgment of God. This is also the position of K. Barth and Paul Tillich, but Calvinists reject this construction which denies the revelation of Scripture. For the Bible tells us that God made this world good with all that is in it, that he took delight in his creatures, man included. The judgment of God, according to Scripture, is against man as sinner, for his wrath is revealed against all unrighteousness, and his punishment fell upon the human race on account of sin (Gen. 3; Rom. 1:18; 2:2; 5:12, etc.). But for Barth and the Existentialists in general, eternity stands in judgment against time, and God declares an absolute "NO" against all history; God is her judgment, her crisis.[2]

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[1] *Calvinism* (Grand Rapids, 1943) p. 137.

Calvinism also rejects the idea of an eternal dualism, namely, between God and Satan, Spirit and Matter, Being and Non-Being, or between two principles, one good, the other evil. This tension in eternity is usually carried over into the created world as one existing between creation, which is good, and *das nichtige,* or the principle of evil. Even though some thinkers deny a dualism and intend to keep an ultimate principle of the Good, or God, as predominant, in effect the antithesis is no longer a biblically oriented idea but becomes a philosophic construction as in the case of Paul Tillich.[3]

Over against such philosophic constructions Calvinists, especially under the leadership of A. Kuyper in the 19th century, have maintained that the biblical concept of the antithesis refers to the enmity that God has set between the Seed of the woman (the incarnate Word and all those who are incorporated by faith into his church) and the seed of the Serpent (all those who live in enmity with God and who persist in their apostasy outside of the covenant). Due to the influence of the Enlightenment and Rationalism, the consciousness of this basic, irreconcilable antithesis has been practically erased from the mind of the church. As a matter of fact, the church became worldly minded in many lands and it was only through movements of revival (e.g., revival in France, Switzerland, and The Netherlands) that the church kept its consciousness of other-worldliness alive. Calvinism received a new lease on life through the prodigious labors of A. Kuyper (see ch. VIII), who again posited the absolute antithesis between the basic principles of the kingdom of God and those of the kingdom of darkness.[4] For Kuyper and his followers, not only in Europe but also in America and South Africa, the doctrine of the antithesis belongs to the most basic principles taught in the Scriptures. For God himself declares that it is he that sets enmity between the woman and the serpent and between their seed respectively (Gen. 3:15). And it is this act of God that has determined the course of history as Augustine clearly understood. The basic opposition between the children of light and the children of darkness is clearly delineated in sacred history and needs no detailed documentation. It began in the fratricide of Cain; is evident in Noah the preacher of righteousness, who built an ark whereby he condemned the world (Heb. 11:7) ; it is especially clear in the election of the patriarchs, Abraham's departure from Ur, his sojourn as stranger; Jacob's vicissitudes, Joseph's persecution by his brethren and Pharaoh's attempt to exterminate the holy nation. Saul persecuting David, Haman's plot to exterminate the Jews, Herod's plan to kill the Christ-child, all these are efforts of Satan to kill the children of God, it is part of the holy war, that great spiritual conflict that God has initiated at the gates of Paradise lost and will continue according to his Word till Paradise shall be regained, when the new Jerusalem shall descend from God to man. In the Old Testament the prophet Elijah stands out as one who was conscious of the antithesis in a time of apostasy. When he came with the thesis that Jehovah alone is the true God, the antithesis was posited by Jezebel in no uncertain terms. She contended that Baal too was God and had a right of equality with Jehovah of the Hebrews. But the true fire-God, who created the sun, and who had the power to destroy Sodom and Gomorrah with fire, also sent fire from heaven on Mount Carmel to prove his proper claims, at which Jezebel tried to kill Elijah. As was previously observed in passing (ch. 11) , the holy warfare was continued in the New Testament period, but the manner of fighting changed. From the physical contest of exterminating enemies of God and of his covenant, the struggle has now become spiritual, as Paul reminds us (Eph. 6:10ff.; II Cor. 10:5) . Christ himself became the great champion of God's cause, for was he not the SEED by way of eminence? Satan himself sought to waylay the Son of God and tempted him three times in the desert and on many later occasions, when friend and foe alike tried to dissuade him from the way of the cross. Satan, that ape of God as Luther dubbed him, even went so far as to send his emissaries into this world so that men were demon-possessed, showing his power and hatred against the Son of God, whose kingdom is an everlasting kingdom.

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[2] K. Schilder, *Wat is de Hemel* (Kampen, 1935), pp. 30ff.; *Zur Begriffsgeschichte des "Paradoxon"* (Kampen, 1933), pp. 295-336; 419-462; Doctoral Dissertation at Erlangen University.

[3] R. Allen Killen, *The Ontological Theology of Paul Tillich* (Kampen, 1956), Doctoral Dissertation, pp. 126ff., also ch. VIII. Cf. Paul Tillich, *Courage to Be* (New Haven, 1952), pp. 32ff., 178ff.; see also his *Systematic Theology,* Vol. I (Chicago, 1951), pp. 186ff.

[4] A. Kuyper, *op. cit.,* pp. 130-41; *Pro Rege* Vol. III (Kampen, 1912), cf. C. Veenhof, *In Kuyper's Lijn* (Goes, 1939), pp. 32-43.

Now it ought to be observed that one of the most subtle tactics in the arsenal of Satan is the attempt to soft pedal the antithesis, to lull the people of God to sleep so that they become at ease in Zion, and are complacent with respect to the world. Satan is ever trying to camouflage his real intention; he tries to make the world look innocuous to the people of God; he would have the people of God labor under the impression that there is a neutral zone in this world, a spiritual no-man's-land, in which they may hobnob with the enemy with impunity. Kuyper's opposition was against the spirit of synthesis, which not only had dominated the thinking of the church during the Middle Ages,[5] but came to expression in the synthesis theology of modern liberalism both in Europe and America, proclaiming the universal fatherhood of God and the universal brotherhood of man. According to this view, all men are by nature godlike and by his incarnation Christ teaches men to show their divine origin. Atonement from sin is relegated to the limbo of ancient folklore, or is rejected as butcher shop theology.

In the spirit of Groen van Prinsterer, the general without an army of Dutch politics, Kuyper began to call the people of Reformed persuasion to spiritual separation *(geestelyk isolement)*.[6] Under the tutelage of Kuyper, who became the titular head of the Antirevolutionary Party after the death of Groen, the Calvinists of the Netherlands increasingly realized that if Christianity is to exert an influence upon the life of the world it must live out of its own distinctive principles. Men began again to see that not by might, nor by power, but through the Spirit of God the cause of God shall prevail; they believed that faith is the victory that overcometh the world. But faith never rests in itself; it clings to Christ, who is the Truth, and lives by his revealed Word. In his justly famous inaugural oration, *Souvereiniteit in Eigen Kring,* held at the founding of the Free University of Amsterdam in 1880, and in his more scientifically and definitively learned, major trilogy, *De Encyclopaidie der Heilige Godgeleerdheid* (*Op. cit.,* p. 9), Kuyper gave the doctrine of the antithesis a scientific construction. He pointed out that this reality which is observable throughout the history of the world is rooted in the point of departure that characterizes every system of thought, which proceeds from the human heart (cf. ch. VIII). Through regeneration a man becomes a new creature so that his consciousness is changed, his mind is enlightened by the Spirit of God to understand the revelation of God given in his Word. Kuyper draws the conclusion that there are two kinds of people, hence also two kinds of science, art, politics — witness the organization in The Netherlands of the Anti-Revolutionary Party, on the foundation of the Word of God versus the principle of Revolution which cries "No God, no master!"

The doctrine of the antithesis maintains that all who are in Christ, the second Adam, are alive unto God and are therefore called to the spiritual warfare of which the Bible speaks (Eph. 6:10ff.; Rom. 7:15-25; I Cor. 1:18-30; 2:6-16; 16:22; II Cor. 4:3-6; 6:14-18; 10:3-6). Christ is the Covenant-Keeper, the Restorer of the law, he is the root of restored humanity, for through him man is restored to God's fellowship and service, which is life.

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[5] D. H. Th. Vollenhoven, *Het Calvinisme en de Reformatie der Wijsbegeerte* (Amsterdam, 1933), pp. 11-200.

[6] G. Brillenburg Wurth, *De Antithese in Onzen Tijd* (Kampen, 1940), p. 8.

On the other hand, that part of fallen humanity which was not restored through Christ, continues its existence in apostasy from the living God. As a consequence, there is in this world a great opposition between the life lived in apostasy and the life lived in obedience to the covenant, a life which through Christ was restored to the fellowship of God. And, since this antithesis roots in the heart, it does not merely affect the periphery, but the whole of a man's life under the sun. Not a single aspect of life, even the seemingly most neutral, lies outside this antithesis of godliness versus godlessness. For God is sovereign over his creation and Christ's kingship extends to the whole of this creation of God. Not only did Jehovah God proclaim the antithesis in Paradise, but the Son of God affirmed it when he said, "My kingdom is not of this world" (John 18:36), and, "Think not that I came to send peace on the earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword" (Matt. 10:34). Since Christ was hated by this world, so will they hate his disciples, for a disciple is not above his teacher, nor a servant above his Lord (Matt. 10:24), "Yea, and all that would live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution" (II Tim. 3:12). We ought not to marvel if the world hates us (I John 3:13) since this hatred is but the expression of the irreconcilable antithesis between the Seed of the woman and the seed of the Serpent. This hatred not only expresses itself religiously but also culturally. For the hatred of the world need not be expressed in persecution and burnings at the stake; it can be effectively expressed by negation and the ignoring of Christ's claims in so-called "neutral" culture. But the doctrine of the antithesis rightly interpreted holds to a duality in culture corresponding to the duality in the race – a belief-ful culture and an apostate culture, for there is no possibility of reconciliation between Belial and Christ, hence no communion *(koinoonia)*, that is, spiritual fellowship, between a believer and an unbeliever (II Cor. 6:15). In principle, therefore, the antithesis is absolute. It admits of no compromise! It permeates to the whole of existence; it leaves no area of life untouched!

Reaction to this doctrine has not been wanting. On the part of some, with Anabaptistic tendencies, the reaction has been world-flight and negation of the cultural mandate to have dominion over the earth. But this is disobedience to the will of the Creator-Lord. It also shows lack of faith in the Mediator-King, whose hegemony extends to the whole domain of human endeavor.[7] In Kuyper's own day both the liberals and the ethicals denied the doctrine of the absolute antithesis, the former because they were committed to the principle of monism (the unity of the spiritual world), and the latter, because they believed in *"Vermittlung"* (mediating theology).

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[7] Cf. Kuyper, *Souvereiniteit in Eigen Kring* (Amsterdam, 1880).

Today the opposition comes from the side of the Barthians, although they ostensibly believe in a double predestination and make much of the absolute distance between God and man. But Barth does not want to interpret predestination as applying to concrete quantities of elect and reprobate, which would separate the world and the church in the plain of history. This does not fit in with Barth's conception of salvation which is super-historical, and the vertical character of the antithesis, namely, between eternity and time, between God and man as creature. For Barth, men can never become the blessed possessors of salvation, for this would but nurture Pharisaism and put the church out of the tension of crisis and judgment. Barth scoffs (*vide supra,* ch. VIII) at Kuyper's idea of a Christian program in politics and in social questions, education or art. This to him is an attempt to externalize grace and to put it under the dominion of man, which is impossible. The attempt to Christianize the world is futile and fateful for true religion, according to these critics. To apply the term "Christian" to all kinds of earthly activities is a denial of the true character of Christ's work and constitutes an anticipation of the paradisaic conditions of the new earth. Furthermore, the movement of external isolation *(isolement)* in political parties and separate Christian schools comes in for especially harsh criticism. Such separatism shows egotistic, proud complacence and self-assurance, which is accompanied by lack of sympathy and understanding for the needs of the world. As a result the proletariat has abandoned the church, which is the haven for conscientious burgers, who are building a *brave new world* of their own.[8]

It ought to be observed that Calvinists are not altogether free from the sins imputed to them. There is a certain amount of middle class complacency (bourgeois mentality) which says "I am rich, and have gotten riches, and have need of nothing"; but knows not that it is wretched and miserable and poor and blind (Rev. 3:17). Along with this self-complacency there is often a disregard for the world's need, and a lack of understanding of what goes on in the mind and heart of humanity. But the real consideration is whether these apparent weaknesses must be ascribed to the principle of antithesis. That is, are they inherent in the idea, do they logically follow from the doctrine of antithesis? To this question the Calvinist would give an unequivocal negative answer, provided one understand the antithesis properly. For the antithesis does not deny the unity of the human race in creation, sin, and need for redemption. All are creatures made in the image of God, and all have sinned and come short of the glory of God. But God's grace is revealed from heaven through Jesus Christ. This brings separation between Cain and Abel, Ishmael and Isaac, Esau and Jacob, Israel and the nations around her. Christ came to cast a fire upon the earth (Luke 12:49ff.); he came into this world for judgment (John 9:39), which went into effect when Christ went to the cross (John 12:31).

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[8] Brillenburg Wurth, *op. cit.,* pp. 11-14.

But the real issue is, How must we visualize this disjunction? Is it external, visible and physical? No doubt, such was the case in the Old Testament (see previous chapter). But what of the New Dispensation? Does not the line of demarcation disappear with the advent of Christ and the Apostle's exposition to the Ephesians that through Christ the middle wall of partition was abolished? Thus some in our time would negate the relevance of the doctrine of the antithesis for today. The contention is that Christ's coming into the world has abolished the antithesis which separated men previously, that the blood of atonement has made of all men one race again. Now this is a grievous misunderstanding of the meaning of the cross of Christ and also of Paul's position that Gentiles are now fellow-citizens with Jews in the one household of God. For Christ came for the rising and falling of many, he is a stumbling-block to the Jews and folly to the Greeks (unbelievers, both) but the power of God to those that believe. Of course, the middle wall of partition has been removed and by the crucifixion and ascension Christ now draws all men unto him (John 12:32). However, this is simply the teaching of New Testament universalism, namely, that all the nations of the earth, and not only the Jews, are to be the heirs of salvation, thus fulfilling the promise of universalism made to Abraham that in him all the nations of the earth would be blessed. But only those lively stones (I Pet. 2:4) that fit into the building, whose architect is God, those who are based upon the cornerstone Christ (Eph. 2:20) are members of the elect race, the holy nation, the kingdom of priests unto God (I Pet. 2:9). To use the doctrine of New Testament universalism and the calling of the nations through the Gospel and the universal kingship of Christ as the basis for the denial of the doctrine of the antithesis is an eggregious error in exegesis, which has fateful repercussions in apologetics and ethics.

Those who would maintain the doctrine of the antithesis in culture do not therefore deny the unity of the race in Adam. But they confess that in the second Adam a relationship has been established which supersedes the first, so that those who receive Christ have the privilege of being the children of God (John 1:12). Moreover, the confession of the antithesis as fact and principle does not constitute a denial of the doctrine of common grace, since these two doctrines are correlative in revelation and were both affirmed with equal ardour by A. Kuyper, who gave both their modern formulation.

The doctrine of the antithesis takes grace seriously. It affirms that the grace of God regenerates men and makes them new creatures, who now are led by the Spirit of God by whose anointing they basically understand all things (I John 2:20). By grace men are set free from the bondage of sin and are delivered from the power of Satan unto God (Acts 26:18), for they "are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God afore prepared that we [they] should walk in them" (Eph. 2:10). All this in contrast to their former state in which they were dead through trespasses and sins, wherein they "once walked according to the course of this world, according to the spirit that now worketh in the sons of disobedience" (Eph. 2:1, 2). But God has foreordained them to become conformed to the image of his Son (Rom. 8:29), and Paul earnestly beseeches these same saints to present their bodies a living sacrifice unto God . . . not fashioned according to this world, but transformed . . . (Romans 12:1, 2). The life of God's people, as the Calvinist interprets Scripture, calls for a distinctively Christian style of living, for it is a life lived by faith in the Son of God through grace. This is the reason that the Calvinist takes the ethical life so seriously, since it stands in the sign of the cross. The law said, "Cursed is every one who continueth not in all things that are written in the book of the law, to do them" (Deut. 27:26). But Christ became a curse for us, and thus redeemed us from the curse of the law (Gal. 3:13). Therefore Christians are lifelong debtors to Christ, to live unto righteousness. They are called as followers of Christ to fight the good fight of faith against the world, the flesh and the devil. At this point it is well to remember that Satan is the archenemy, who since the days of the first Adam, whom he attacked from without, has had access to the heart of man which by nature is dead in trespasses and sins (Eph. 2:2). Hence Paul calls on saints to mortify the deeds of the flesh and he describes the struggle against sin in his own being with dramatic poignancy as "the good which I would I do not; but the evil which I would not, that I practice. . . . Wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me out of the body of this death?" (Romans 7:19, 24).

Now on the basis of this confession of Paul there are those who contend that the antithesis cannot be absolute, because, it is said, Christians also sin, while unbelievers still do a certain amount of good. But this is not apropos! For even the sinning of a regenerate man differs from that of the unregenerate. Does not Paul confess that the evil he does he would not! So it is indeed. The believer sins inadvertently, against his will, for he delights in the law of the Lord after the inward man (Rom. 7:22; Pss. 1:2; 119; 11, etc.). But the unregenerate sins according to the law of his being, and the mind of the flesh is enmity against God, it is not subject to the law of God, and they that are of the flesh cannot please God (Rom. 8:6-8). And the "good" of the unregenerate is totally different from the good works of the righteous, for all that is not out of faith is sin (Rom. 14:23), so that the relative good in civil affairs does not invalidate the fact that all of the life of the unregenerate stands in the sign of apostasy, for without faith it is impossible to please God (Heb. 11:6).

Of course, no one contending for the comprehensiveness and pervasiveness of the antithesis (absolute antithesis) would be so foolish as to say that believers and unbelievers now have nothing in common. It has already been observed that they have a common human nature, they are image-bearers of God, and fell into sin in common, and they have the external preaching of the gospel in common, and the whole of the physical world of time and space, and the cultural mandate and urge, the terrain in which to work and the tools also in common. In short, the whole metaphysical situation is common,[9] but the antithesis is a matter of faith, and the knowledge of faith. Antithesis is not in the object but in the subject of knowledge and of faith. It is the question of allegiance. Here it is impossible to temporize. One is either for or against the Christ. "Ye cannot serve God and Mammon!" To deny the absoluteness (all-pervasiveness) of the antithesis is to deny the absoluteness of the work of regeneration, which is an act of God through his Spirit. Absolute does not imply perfection, for the regenerate is still following after sanctification, without which no man shall see the Lord (Heb. 12:14). But sin now dwells in the saint against his will.[10] Neither is the unregenerate sinner perfect in wickedness; he is not absolutely but totally depraved.

There is, furthermore, the question of principle or person in the antithesis. There are those who maintain that the antithesis does not draw a line of demarcation between persons, but only in principles, ideologies, philosophies of life. But this is hardly correct. It is not a question of either or, but of this and that. The Bible throughout speaks of persons in portraying the spiritual opposition between the two kingdoms. The kingdom of Christ is not a matter of principles that somehow exist in mid-air, but the kingdom is made up of those who are willing to subject themselves to the sovereign will of the Redeemer-King. And the kingdom of Satan is also made up of men, persons who deny the claims of the covenant, who live in apostasy. The Seed of the woman is a man, the Son of Man; and those who are on the Lord's side are persons, who stand over against Satan and his adherents. Not only in the Old Testament but also in the

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[9] C. Van Til, *Common Grace* (Philadelphia, 1947), p. 5.

[10] Cf. *Psalter Hymnal* (Grand Rapids, 1934), Liturgical Section, p. 91, in the form for the Lord's Supper.

New, the Son of God is opposed by persons, who are inspired by the spirit of the abyss, a diabolic person, namely Satan. Jesus opposed persons, Scribes and Pharisees, Pilate and Herod, Judas and Caiaphas. Paul was opposed by Simon Magus, the Jews of Antioch, Demetrius and Tertullus, Festus and Nero, who probably put him to death. Principles of evil can only become incarnate in persons, and it is simply impossible to contradict principles without opposing persons! Paul even withstood Peter to his face (opposed him in no uncertain terms) because he was carried away by the dissimulation of the Judaizers; and Jesus recognized the satanic influence in Peter when he demurred at the prospect of Christ's passion.

This last observation suggests that it is not within the competence of any man within the limitations of time and history to determine unmistakably all the persons belonging to either camp in the spiritual warfare. For alas, sometimes the children of God allow themselves to be used as tools of Satan (witness Peter's case and that of Joseph's brethren) but they may not forthwith be designated as sons of Satan on this account, for many shall be saved as by fire, but their works are burned as stubble (I Cor. 3:12-15). No doubt there are many members today of godless labor unions such as the CIO and AFL, which deny the kingship of Christ and are founded on humanistic principles exclusively, who nevertheless are among those for whom Christ died. But they are blinded by the god of this world and are to be pitied, yet must be opposed in as far as they defend their godless affiliation. However, such speaking of the truth must always be in love, in order to gain such weak brethren that they too may stand against the wiles of the devil, that they may be transformed from cowering to courageous souls, willing to wield the sword of the Spirit (Eph. 6:17). And all Christians ought to be warned against the sinful pride of elevating their own principles above the judgment of the Word, or identify their program with the truth, since they too are finite, fallible sinners. Besides, there is always the great danger that God's children assume a superior attitude because they are conscious of being in possession of the truth, which often antagonizes the world and makes the preaching of the Gospel ineffective. The solution for this besetting sin is not to deny the absoluteness of the truth revealed or to deny that men may have the truth (John 8:32), so that one takes his refuge from Pharisaism in relativism (a well populated island of refuge for many nominal Calvinists today), nor is it necessary to scotch the doctrine of the antithesis, blaming it for such sinful perversion. Such conclusions remind one of the Communistic remedy for the evils of capitalism, namely, get rid of the system; it throws out the baby with the bath, or, to change the figure, it suggests jumping from the frying pan into the fire. Actually this is the same "danger" that is found also in the doctrine of election and which is advanced by some as an objection to acceptation of this part of God's revelation. Again others would silence all mention of the doctrine of Christian liberty because it is dangerous. Thus one might continue, but the Calvinist in all these cases puts his trust in the Word of God and in his grace. Since God is the creator and revealer of the antithesis it must become a reality in the lives of all the children of God, since they walk in the light. The remedy for the sin of pride is a humble recognition of God's grace in our lives which separates the redeemed and makes them a people for God's own possession. But saints remain sinners in this dispensation, sinners who are justified by faith. Those who believe in the antithesis as a reality of God's gracious activity in this world must ever confess:

> Not what my hands have done
> Can save my guilty soul
> Not what my toiling flesh has borne
> Can make my spirit whole
> Not what I feel or do Can give me peace with God.
>
> Thy grace alone, O God, To me can pardon speak;
> Thy power alone, O Son of God, Can this sore bondage break
> No other work save thine, No other blood will do,
> No strength save that which is divine Can bear me safely through.

Those who subscribe to the doctrine of the antithesis do not advocate world-flight but world-conquest. They seek through the preaching of the Gospel, which is the power of God, to win others to the cause of Christ, to challenge the enemy to desert the colors of the prince of this world. Whenever a convert is made for Christ, it means that the ranks of the enemy are decimated, but this does not abrogate the antithesis, which can only be abolished when Satan and his angels and all the wicked are cast into the pool of fire, when the Prince of Peace shall establish his kingdom in peace and in righteousness, world without end. But next to the church, to whom the Gospel has been committed, there is the task of every Christian to confess Christ in this world and to fight the good fight of faith, not only inwardly against the carnal mind of the old man, but also externally in the world of men and events. And since organization is a more effective means of opposing the enemies of the Cross of Christ, Christians are called to organize themselves for Christ. However, this matter will be taken up under the discussion of the Kingship of Christ in Calvinistic Culture.

CHAPTER XIII

THE CALVINIST AND THE WORLD

One of the aims of the author in writing this book is to delineate the position of the Christian as cultural creature in relation to the world. This is important since one's attitude toward the world reflects one's relationship to Christ, for and by whom all things were created (John 1:2; Rev. 4:11; Col. 1:16), through whom they are sustained (Heb. 1:3), and through whom they are reconciled to the Father (Col. 1:20). For God was in Christ reconciling *the world* to himself (II Cor. 5:19) says Paul, and the Samaritans recognized him as the Saviour of *the world* (John 4:42). Hence man as God's creature and world-conqueror stands ever between these two poles: God and the universe, Christ and the world. On the one hand, the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness of men (Rom. 1:18) and all the world lieth under the judgment of God (Rom. 3:19); but, on the other hand, the saints have the promise that they shall judge the world (I Cor. 6:2). This indicates something of the ambiguity of the situation, indicating the various usages of the term "world" in Scripture.

Christian men have suggested various solutions to the problem created by this ambiguity. Some have the pilgrim mind, pure and simple; they look upon the world as an evil to be endured, but they are travelling toward their heavenly home and can tarry for only a night. They do not concern themselves at all with culture; they eat their bread in sorrow and call men to repent. Others hold the lust for life to be basically sound; they labor in the sweat of their brow, to be sure, but they enjoy the things of time and sense inasfar as these are not prohibited by the Word. They believe that man has, on the basis of common grace, much in common with the unbeliever, including not merely sunshine and rain but also the cultural products and the blessings of civilization. These enjoy the hospitality of earth and the beauty of the world as God's handiwork, but also the achievements of culture and the society of men. Still others take basically the warrior approach and seek to win the world for Christ and to overcome the world through faith. To the one the predominating mood is that of sorrow and toil in this vale of tears; to another it is one of joy and eager expectation; and to a third it is one of resolute determination. On the one hand, the world is pitied and shunned; on the other it is enjoyed and shared; and in the third case it becomes a place of conflict and exertion. The world may be avoided, accepted, or attacked. Men consider themselves martyrs, appreciators or witnesses, and workers. And the really striking fact about all of this is that in each case Scripture is offered as proof. On the one hand, it is pointed out that this world lieth in the evil one (I John 5:19); on the other, that God loves the world and did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through him might be saved (John 3:16, 17). But, whereas God loves the world, believers are prohibited from loving it (I John 2:15), and he that is a friend of the world is an enemy of God (James 4:14). Christ is the one through whom the world exists (Heb. 1:3) but he affirms that he does not pray for the world (John 17:9). The world is the receptive field for the sowing of the Word, but it hates the Sower, Christ (Matt. 13:38; John 7:7) because he testifies that its works are evil.

It would constitute an egregious error, however, to conclude that the Bible presents us with a paradox theology concerning the world, blowing hot and cold at the same time. It must be clearly understood that the world is projected under different aspects. For it makes all the difference in the world whether one thinks of the world as created and pronounced good at the dawn of history, or the world as lying under judgment because of sin. Is the world the product of the chief architect and builder, God, declaring the glory of its maker, or is it the playground of demons, the province of Satan and the foyer to hell? Is one to think of the world as a great and marvelous book in which all the creatures, great and small, appear as letters revealing the invisible things of God, or is it the Devil's doodling sheet for the creation of caricatures?

In order to maintain a proper balance and also a sympathetic appreciation for the views of others, we must remember that the term "world" has various connotations in Scripture. Here, if anywhere, the balance of Calvinism appears. For the Calvinist, as has been affirmed previously, is a stickler for taking the whole truth, for following the Word wherever it leads.

The Bible never presents the narrow dilemma of either or with respect to the world, but it requires both this and that. A Christian is at once a pilgrim and stranger, and a worker and warrior who appreciates the marvelous gifts of God and uses them for God's glory. A follower of Christ will be moved with compassion for the world, but also turn away in disgust; he will love and hate, devote and avoid, dedicate and abominate according to the requirements of the situation. It is, therefore, imperative that the biblical teaching concerning the "world" be examined somewhat more in detail, in order to arrive at clarity of conception in the matter.

In the first place, then, the world is presented in Scripture as an adornment, fashioned by the divine Artist in the act of creation for his own enjoyment (Col. 1:17; Rev. 4:11; Ps. 19:8; Job 38-41, etc.). As such the world is a cosmos, a symphonic masterpiece, a harmonious effulgence of the divine creator, the very opposite of chaos and discord. In relation to time the world is designated as *aeon,* for it is not only a work of art, but also history; it has both a vertical and a horizontal dimension. God made this world of beauty for himself (Prov. 16:4; Rev. 4:11) and it is a mirror of his perfections, not only in the creative act but also in its continued existence. God loves this world, all of its hidden and invisible reality, the whole of the stellar universe for it is his possession (John 3:16; Ps. 50:12; Ps. 103:22). But through sin this world lost its harmony so that it groans and travails in pain (Rom. 8:22), waiting for its redemption together with the sons of God (vss. 19-22). But God so loved the world that he sent his Son (John 3:16) to reconcile all things unto the Father (Col. 1:20) so that Christ became the propitiation for the sin of the whole world (I John 2:2). This doctrine in no wise denies or jeopardizes the Calvinistic teaching of limited atonement and sovereign election. If one has no eye for this primary sense of the term "world" and interprets it as referring to the world of men, he lands logically in universalism, the teaching that all men are saved. The contention of the Arminians that Christ died for all, but only those who choose for God are saved, does despite to the sovereign character of God and denies his power to execute what he has willed. But we must see the world as God's original creation which shall not be destroyed but is reconciled and saved, as the Bible maintains (II Cor. 5:19; I Cor. 7:13), even though its fashion passes away, for there shall be a new heaven and a new earth in which righteousness shall dwell forever. This world is the concern of the Son of God, since it has its unity and coherence in him (Col. 1:17). He is the Logos of creation (John 1:2) and the Wisdom of God that comes to expression in the beautiful book of nature (Prov. 8; Job 28:28). This world, which God loves and Christ saves, is not evil, but suffers, nevertheless, the effects of sin, because of its close connection with man, whom God constituted king of creation at the beginning. But Christ, who is a cosmic Redeemer, has come to deliver it from the bondage and corruption of sin together with the sons of God, which is called the restitution of all things (Acts 3:21). Until that time the Sabbath songs of creation are *sub voce,* for sinners still deface the earth. However, the Old Testament prophet-poet (quite contrary to the nearsighted revivalist caught up in his dualistic conception of spirit versus matter, seeking to save souls merely to populate heaven), raises a *Hallelujah* at the prospect of seeing the earth cleansed of sinners (Ps. 104:35) for whom there is no place in the city of God (Rev. 22:14, 15).

What shall be the attitude of the Christian toward this "world," which is the Father's creation? It would be quite improper to apply the warning words of the Apostle John, "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world" (I John 2:15). The world, which God loves and Christ saves, is indeed the proper object of love as long as it does not take the place of God and become an idol. For this is even true of members of one's family – we may not love father or mother more than Christ, but nevertheless, there is a proper level of love for men and for the works of God. We ought neither to despise nor deify creation, but we must use it in the service of God as one of his good gifts (I Cor. 7:22, 31). Christ, who is our head, has placed all things at our disposal, and he rules over all for the sake of his body, the church. Calvin, therefore, although he emphasized the pilgrim aspect of our lives, always placed great emphasis upon the calling to use God's good gifts with gratitude, avoiding both abstinence and license (*Institutes,* III, 19). The material world is not evil but is the workshop wherein the believer executes the cultural mandate with all men. Every creature of God is good and is sanctified by the Word and prayer (I Tim. 4:4, 5). This appreciation for the creation of God must also include the body, for it is the temple of the Holy Spirit (I Cor. 6:19), and the creation ordinance of marriage is not to be despised (I Tim. 4:3). Every form of ascetic denial of nature as evil in itself is a perversion of the truth that God is creator of heaven and earth and that Christ is Lord over all. Creation and re-creation through the Spirit may never be separated or opposed as the lower and higher aspects of reality. The Christian is not more than man, but he becomes a new creature in Christ while yet remaining in the world. He also remains subject to the creation ordinances as a member of a family, state, and society. As such he is subject to civil laws, social prescription, and tradition. But all these natural relationships in the world are now sanctified through Christ, so that he marries in the Lord, begets children in the covenant, and labors with all his might as unto the Lord. The new man in Christ seeks to obey the injunction of the Apostle to use the world as not abusing it (I Cor. 7:31), because the fashion of this world passeth away. This applies to all the objects of nature and everything that God has made for man's cultural dominance. The Christian has been made free through Christ to love the law of his God and is led by the Spirit of God to a joyful obedience. He rejects the bleak philosophy of those who cry, "touch not, taste not, handle not," who are in subjection to ordinances after the commandments of men (Col. 2:20-23). However, he is equally adamant against all those who would confound liberty with license and follow the Epicurean motto, "Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die" (I Cor. 15:32). This all points to the important fact that we are not sole possessors, but merely stewards of this earth and its riches, for the earth is the Lord's and the fulness thereof! All of man's activity under the sun, therefore, is not for himself, but unto the Lord: work and play, eating and drinking, buying and selling, begetting children and giving them in marriage, building houses and living in them.

To conclude, God's world, the created universe, is an object of love and of joy. This is the place where God wants man as his cultural creature, and man has no right to shun the world or to hate it, for he would thereby deny his calling and be a rebel. For God has placed his creature here to be his co-worker in fulfilling the law of creation and the creative purposes of the Master Artist.

In the second place, there is a kind of neutral usage of the term "world" when it refers to the inhabited world without reference to the quality of men. When Luke tells us that Caesar sent out a decree for all the world to be taxed, he is referring to this world of men (Luke 2:1). When the enemies of Jesus referred to the popularity of the despised rabbi from Nazareth, they deplored the fact that the whole world was going after him (John 12:19). When the men of Thessalonica wanted to characterize the work of Paul and Silas they said, "these that have turned the world upside down are come hither also" (Acts 17:6). Christ came into the world not to condemn the world (John 12:47), but to precipitate a crisis (John 9:39). He came as one sent of the Father into the world. He in turn sends his disciples into this inhabited world of men (John 17:18), to recruit out of this world those whom the Father has given him (John 17:6), the world being the field of operations (Matt. 13:38), in which the disciples must appear as light (Matt. 5:14).

In the third place, there is the ethical-spiritual connotation in the term "world," which sets it over against Christ and his church antithetically. This is the world that was condemned by the preaching of Noah before the flood (Heb. 11:7). This world knew not God (I John 3:2; I Cor. 1:21), nor his Son (John 1:10), but crucified the Lord of glory (I Cor. 2:8). This world lieth in the evil one (I John 5:19), and its wisdom is foolishness with God (I Cor. 1:21), and has Satan as its prince (John 12:31; 14:30; 16:11). This present evil world (Gal. 1:4), from which Christ has delivered his own, hates and oppresses those who belong to Christ (John 16:31; I John 3:13). Its mind is in direct and absolute antithesis to that of Christ (I Cor. 2:12; II Cor. 6:14-16; 10:5), for it has its affinity with and solidarity in Satan (I John 5:19), while the church lives in and through Christ, who is her life (Col. 3:4; Gal. 2:20). This world is at enmity with God and is carnal (Rom. 8:7, 8); to it the preaching of the cross is foolishness (I Cor. 1:18). It may, then, be defined as the mass of mankind as alienated from God through sin and living after the lusts of the flesh. By nature all men belong to this world, since they all are dead in trespasses and sins and are children of wrath (Eph. 2:1, 2) until God in his mercy quickens them in Christ and sets them in heavenly places (vss. 4-6). The world understands not judgment (Prov. 28:5), and evil men know not at what they stumble (Prov. 4:19); their way shall be turned upside down (Ps. 146:9), and sinners shall be consumed out of the earth (Ps. 104:35). Of the wicked worldling Paul says that he held down the truth in unrighteousness (Rom. 1:21) wherefore God gave them up to vile passions (vss. 26ff.) and to a reprobate mind, thus punishing sin with sin, "whose end is perdition, whose god is their belly, whose glory is their shame, who mind earthly things" (Phil. 3:19). This is the world in all its stark and lurid godlessness and wicked rebellion against the God of heaven.

* * *

The pertinent question which must be faced at this juncture is that of the believer's attitude and use of this "world" in the ethico-religious sense which is employed by Scripture. It is certainly not an easy matter to determine the exact usage of Scripture in this matter, but the main lines as sketched above ought to be clear. However, sometimes one of the writers of Holy Writ will use all three senses in one of his writings and may use two of them interchangeably. This is the case with John when he quotes the words of Jesus which apply to the ecumenical world, that is to say, the inhabited universe, out of which Christ called those whom the Father gave him (vs. 6), and for whom he prays. But he does not pray for the world at large. However, Christ does not pray that these should be taken out of the world, that is, in its ecumenical sense. But at the same time Christ says that the world hates them, because they are not of the world, even as he is not of the world. Here Christ clearly refers to this *present evil world* under the domination of the Devil, which lives at enmity with the Father.

This world is basically a world of men, not of things. However, men have ideas, produce ideologies and create a culture, which may be said to belong to them. In that sense the world has a character and a being as a whole. Lamech and his sons made life more comfortable by inventing tent dwellings, musical instruments, and forging iron. The urge in the sons of Cain to make this world their home in order to forget their forlorn condition has always been stronger than the urge of the sons of God, who sought a city that hath foundations in the heavens. For the children of this world seek their Paradise restored here and now. Hence they have bent every effort and expended all their energy in this quest to subdue the earth in order to rule over it and gratify themselves in its goodness. Now the production of musical instruments and the use of them is not evil, but the question simply is whether these things are used in the service of God (note that I do not say worship, for the service of God is far broader than acts of worship), that is, whether the direction of the life of the user is godly or godless, for all that is not of faith is sin. Since believers may not go out of this world and are members of the race that is called to bring the earth to fruition, their labors are often inextricably interwoven with those of the world (haters of God). This is the case in science and industry, invention, and prevention of disease. Such cooperation does not contaminate the man any more than the eating of food without the washing of hands, for out of the heart are the issues of life. The development of modern industry and the progress of modern science are not of the devil, for they are the result of man's creative energy exercised upon nature, which is given by the Spirit of God. The things that man produces in his cultural efforts are not in themselves sinful. They belong to the *adiaphora* (things indifferent) of which Calvin speaks, to be used indifferently as the occasion may demand. A house or car, just as well as a horse or field, a radio or television set, a knife or a suit, may be used either in the service of God or the service of the prince of this world. But the tone of a culture is determined by the spirit that animates the users. As was pointed out before, we have the urge to cultural achievement in common and also the materials and the terrain, but a different spirit animates the children of light than those who are of this world. For this *present evil world* (Gal. 1:4) lives in a state of rebellion against the Son, by whom the Father rules over all things. It uses all the cultural achievements of the race to proclaim its independence and to express its enmity against the Lord's anointed.

This enmity comes to expression in the cultural patterns of the world (cf. Lamech, who took two wives and initiated polygamy), to which the believer may not conform (Rom. 12:2). Lamech defied God and the divine creation ordinance of monogamy. He expressed his contempt for the law of God in his notorious song of the sword and set the pace for the glorification and gratification of lust, which is still the stock in trade of Hollywood. Thus the carnal mind is glorified and man is dehumanized. And the tragic part of this degeneration of the race is that the children of God sometimes imitate the world in these cultural patterns. They too want to play fast and loose with the sacred ordinances concerning matrimony and the rearing of children. David and Solomon practiced polygamy, for example, thus beclouding the issue between the children of light and the children of darkness so that contemporary professors of sociology even in Christian colleges leave the students in a quandary as to the requirements of the Word of God, on the ground that Old Testament saints did not conform to monogamy. As a matter of fact this is a gross confounding of the historical authority and the normative authority of Scripture. For David fell into the heinous sins of lust and murder, for which he received a grievous punishment from the Lord so that blood did not depart from his house. But although the Scripture reports the sins of the saints, it does not condone them. The report of sin has historical authority, but no normative value for our lives except by way of warning and admonition. Solomon, at least, became a very dubious witness to the grace of God by his idolatry, fostered by his polygamy, and David was a man after God's own heart, not because he took several wives, but because he walked humbly with his God in the main and because of his zeal for the house of God.

But whereas formerly chiefly kings and rich men were able to follow the worldly pattern, in our own day the common church member is continuously being subjected to the allurements of the worldly scheme of things and a non-Christian style of life. The Hollywood movies, plus the colonies of artists in our cultural centers, and the great of this earth are blatantly blaring forth their godlessness through all the modern media of communication. Godless culture is being disseminated through television, radio, pictorial magazines, best sellers, drug store paper-back novels, and pornographic photography, so that the world impinges upon God's people from every angle, and many are succumbing to its subtle insinuations. Especially the young people are susceptible to the blandishments of the world through these media, since the church is weak in its approach to the problem of culture, often uncritically accepting the worldly pattern, because it does not appreciate the full implications of its creed for life in its fulness.

But surely the Word is not silent on these things. Although God no longer calls for the extermination of the wicked world as was the case with the Amalekites, Canaanites, and Jezebel's prophets, nevertheless the antithesis remains, and the friend of God must be an enemy of the world lest he be found to be an enemy of God (James 4:4). This was also clearly revealed on occasion in the Old Testament, and is not contradicted by Abraham's friendly relations with Aner, Escol and Mamre, David's use of Hiram and his skills in gathering materials for the house of God, or Solomon's hiring of skilled workmen to do certain things that the Israelites were not able to do in the construction of the temple. I refer to the condemnation of the alliance between Jehoshaphat and wicked Ahab; the man who had sold himself to commit iniquity in Samaria. This alliance was consummated by the marriage of Jehoram, son of Jehoshaphat to Athaliah, daughter of wicked Jezebel. This man later slew all his brothers and walked in the way of the kings of Israel, although his father sought the Lord God of his father David. Ahab, who was a politician of the first rank, had overwhelmed Jehoshaphat with honors, so that the latter said in response to the invitation to go to war with Ahab against Syria, "I am as thou art, and my people as thy people." But he forgot the covenant, which had been broken by Ahab. Of this he was reminded upon his return to Jerusalem, after his miraculous escape from the trap set for him by his wily "friend" (cf. II Chron. 18), when the prophet Jehu, son of Hanani, met him with this announcement from God, "Shouldest thou help the ungodly, and love them that hate the Lord? therefore is wrath upon thee from before the Lord" (II Chron. 19:2). Here, if anywhere, a normative principle is enunciated by the prophet of the Lord. This is not a prescription of Old Testament morality, but an enduring principle prescriptive for the great spiritual warfare between the seed of the woman and that of the serpent. David expresses it even more pointedly when he cries in the ardour of his love, "Shall not I hate them that hate Thee, O God" (Ps. 139:21).

Here we find ourselves back to the expression of an absolute antithesis — love versus hate. He that loves God cannot love the world, but must hate it. The idea that a child of God is animated only by love is clearly unbiblical and an invention of the modernist, who has a God of love, but not of holiness and justice; but our God is a consuming fire (Heb. 12:29). Christ, who came to destroy the works of the devil, made an absolute disjunction between those who were for him and those who were against him (Matt. 12:30). He spoke of his enemies as a generation of vipers, who being evil, were unable to speak the good (Matt. 12:34), being children of their father, the devil (John 8:44). But all those who are of the truth, said Christ, hear my voice (John 18:38). Here there is an absolute antithesis, on the one hand, children of Satan, the Liar, on the other hand, children of Christ, the Truth. Christ places his kingdom in absolute contradiction to the kingdom of this world, when he says, "My kingdom is not of this world." Hence the life of the citizen of the heavenly kingdom differs *en toto* from that of a citizen of this world. Those who are followers of the Lamb must remain in physical proximity to the evil world, but they have eternal life, which is something totally different in essence from the present existence of those who know not God. For God, the Father, has bestowed his love upon them, so that they have become the children of God in the special sense of having been restored to his fellowship and service. Thus they are restored to the image of God, having true knowledge, holiness, and righteousness (Col. 3:10; Eph. 4:24). For he that believeth in the Son hath everlasting life (John 3:36); however, he must progressively be conformed to the image of Christ (Rom. 8:29) and must keep himself unspotted from the world (James 1:27). Hence the strong admonition of the apostle John: "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world; If any man love the world the love of the Father is not in him" (I John 2:15, 16). The world lives by the carnal mind, the lust of the eyes and of the flesh and the pride of life (I John 2:17). But says Paul, we may not be conformed to this sinful pattern of life, but must rather be transformed by the renewing of the mind (Rom. 12:2). In fact, Paul uses even a stronger figure when he says that the believer must be crucified to the world and the world to him (Gal. 6:14). What does this mean? Simply that just as the cross is a horrid spectacle of suffering and ignominious death, so the world must be to the Christian a thing abhorred (this wicked, world, that is), and the Christian, on his part, will seem to be such a misfit, such an odd fellow, that the world abhors him — the believer is crucified in the sight of the world. The world, in spite of its fair words (cf. Ghandi and other religious men), hates the Christ of God; it wants him out of the way and has for him only a cross. And that cross is the offense and stumbling-block even today.

But what of the positive impact of the Christian? Christ said, "I am the light of the world . . . I am the way, the truth and the life, no man cometh unto the Father but by me," thus setting himself up as the supreme religious authority. Should the Christian hesitate to assert the finality of Jesus Christ as the only way to the Father? There are those who call this an absolutistic approach. It is this intolerance of Christianity that it not tolerated in the world, and that it never was tolerated is clear from the records of the persecutions the church endured throughout its long history. But someone may be objecting and saying, "What you are now talking about is a purely religious matter, where the lines can be clearly drawn, but in the cultural situation the thing is not so simple." True, it is not simple, not easy, not arrived at without profound study and searching analysis. But basically the antithesis is just as absolute in culture as it is in the sphere of religion, for culture is simply the service of God in our lives; it is religion externalized. Here the great danger looms again of separating our religious convictions from our cultural expression of religion. And this is the fatal and great divorce from which the church has suffered so long and so much.

The thesis is that if and when Christians individually and as a community assert the kingship of Jesus Christ in the world (this present evil world, alienated from God, the Father), the world will not merely oppose such a confession but will hate those who make this confession and will persecute them in various ways. Naturally, I am not saying that an inoffensive, parlor-Christianity proclaiming a social welfare program and, in the end, the salvation of all, is going to be hated. For no man ever yet hated his own flesh, and the world recognizes its own. But the true children of God, because they condemned the works of the world, have been hated and persecuted from the time of Abel and Daniel until now. Hatred does not always express itself in outright murder, the lions' den, or the clenched fist of the Nazis and their concentration camps. There is a more subtle, and perhaps, in the end a more destructive form of hatred which is expressed by ignoring the disciple of Christ. Modern culture does not take the Christian claim into account; the Christian receives it a pitying glance at best. This is refined, cultured hatred, and is devilish. The silent hatred of the world against the Christ of God, which comes to expression in the neutrality concept as applied in the field of education, art, labor relations, journalism, etc., is the most destructive of all and the hardest to combat, since the opposition shrugs its shoulders and claims neutrality as its asylum of tolerance. And many believers still succumb to the blandishments of the enemy, when he puts up the camouflage of neutrality. For it sounds so fair to give every man a chance on an equal basis; it seems to many a true sign of tolerance if one does not start from a religious bias. And why prejudice the case? Why make enemies unnecessarily? Who am I that I should think myself to have a "corner" on the truth! What insufferable, Pharisaic pride is this! And with more such satanic sophistry, the disciple of Christ is finally silenced and withdraws into his citadel of the salvation of the soul, leaving the entire domain of culture to "the world." But, when the believer accepts and lives by the neutrality concept, he has committed treason to the cause of Christ. Scripture allows no neutrality with respect to the claims of God and of his Christ. For the affirmation of neutrality assumes that the subject is independent of God to the point that he can safely, with impunity, disregard the claims of the Lord. This the Bible will not allow. No man has the right to ignore God; in fact, God is the ever-present, inescapable Presence that no man can ignore. Therefore, the neutrality concept of the world is a form of denial; it says in effect, "God, stay away from my door; I can get along well enough on my own." This is the philosophy of Esau, a profane person. Neutrality is profanity, it is godlessness, it constitutes the secular mind, which tries to make of religion a thing apart from life. But this is blasphemy!

The believer, in his opposition to the world, therefore, must see that the so-called "neutral union" is an enemy of the cross of Christ just as well as the communistic party leader that curses the church and her King. For the neutrality postulate of the union involves a tacit curse upon the anointed One, whom the Father sent into the world and by whom he now rules over all things, since he has given to the Son a name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, and every tongue should confess him as Lord to the glory of God and the Father (Phil.

2:9-11) . The labor unions of our day are not one whit behind those of whom the Psalmist testifies that they took counsel together against the Lord and his anointed (Ps. 2) . Naturally, no one ought to be unrealistic enough to think that the leaders of industry and the great power moguls of finance are more inclined to subject themselves to the demands of the Word. Hence the Christian has a cultural calling over against the world to testify against its godless character. There is always the danger that he will lose the proper perspective due to the pilgrim mind and the martyr complex that sometimes obsesses the disciples of Christ, because of the hatred of the world. But the life of the Christian is not simply undergoing something that must be endured, a burden to be borne, but is a holy calling. More of this in another chapter.

Finally, it is imperative, in this connection, to consider the phenomenon of worldly-mindedness. Against this sin Scripture warns the believer in no uncertain terms, "Love not the world!" But do Christians see clearly that the Johannine prohibition stated positively really means that one must hate the world? And that this world is the old Adam that must be mortified within the heart of every saint-sinner who confesses that Christ is his Saviour? For the deeds of the flesh must be killed off. There is a law in my members warring against the law of my mind (Rom. 7:23) , bringing me into captivity, from which Christ must set me free again and again. Worldliness is not a matter of externals but of the heart, out of which are the issues of life. A Christian may wear the uniform of his country, salute the flag, eat and drink the foods, wear the clothes and live in the houses of the prevailing culture without setting his heart on the things of the world. Naturally, the apostolic admonition to modesty in dress and sobriety in the whole of life must be observed. But it ought to be clearly understood that the prohibition against world-conformity is a spiritual matter; it pertains to the mind that is in us, thinking, loving and hating, desiring and abhorring, doing and refraining. Basically, the Christian must beware of the ideologies of the world. And these ideologies do come to expression in the clothes one wears, the house he arranges and beautifies, the use or abuse of property and the attitude toward the body and its appetites. There is also the worldly mind in the matter of the procreation and nurture of children. The Scripture holds that children are an heritage of the Lord, and children of youth are as arrows in the hand of a mighty man; "Happy is the man that hath his quiver full of them: they shall not be ashamed, but they shall speak with the enemy in the gate (Ps. 127:4, 5) . But the worldly cultural ideal is to restrict the number of children to the point that they may be coddled and enjoyed, but so that they will not interfere with the pleasure of the parents, sexual or otherwise. The believer nurtures his child in the fear of the Lord, but the worlding lives in fear of the child and the panel of experts which makes man the measure of all things and jumps from one extreme to another in its child psychology.

If believers are conscious of their other-worldly inheritance, they will not be easily moved or deflected from their heavenly calling in the matter of rearing children, which is by all odds the greatest cultural challenge to which the creator has called his image-bearer. For, in this case, we are not merely the stewards of time and talent, of nature and her forces, but of God's own image-bearers, who have an eternal destiny, whose culture will remain deficient, and, inasmuch as they do not know God, falls short of attaining the true end of man's creation. Yet many "Christians" seem so little aware of their heavenly inheritance, and have been so little weaned from the things of earth, that they accept implicitly the worldly pattern and standard of recreation, love-making, art production and appreciation, social behaviour, and a host of other cultural phenomena. But a new creature in Christ (II Cor. 5:17), who belongs to his faithful Saviour for time and eternity (*Heidelberg Catechism,* Ans. I), ought to beware of running after the world. Infatuation with hte world, even in dress, manners, sports, often reflects the carelessness of those who are not on their guard against the enemy, and the recklessness of those who do not acknowledge the basic antithesis between the church and the world, as enemy of God. The only positive cure for worldiness is the renewing of the mind, through the Spirit, in obedience to the Word. This will truly be the inmost desire of all those who have the mind of Christ (I Cor. 2:16). For the Christian has new insights, since he has renounced the hidden works of darkness and the wisdom of this world for the foolishness of the cross of Christ. In the final analysis, there are but two patterns after which one can plan his life, that of Christ and that of the world. Since the believer is being progressively transformed into the image of Christ, it is imperative that his culture reflect this metamorphosis.

CHAPTER XIV

CALVINISTIC CULTURE AND CHRIST'S MEDIATORIAL KINGSHIP

Culture receives its meaning from the meaning of history. If history is a meaningless cycle in which man does not transcend the exigencies of time and space, then culture, too, becomes meaningless. Man then is without hope in the treadmill called life. Christianity rejected the cyclical theory of history and substituted the linear concept, with a consummation that makes all things meaningful. But, since the advent of Existentialism, the Christian hope has lost its impelling power and men have again been reduced to a life of a never-ending succession of events that have no basic meaning as far as man is able to ascertain. The meaninglessness of life has become the dominant note in modern literature and painting, as well as in the philosophy of the Existentialists. Existentialism accepts the mythical view of history, which denies historical significance to the facts but puts the emphasis upon their symbolical character. Within history all is dynamic and changing, there is no absolute truth. Even God is becoming.[1]

Historic Christianity, to which Calvinism adheres, believes that Christ stands at the center of history. Christ gives meaning to all the past since it is the preparation for his coming in the flesh, and he dominates the entire future until the end of time, his second advent. As a matter of fact, Christ has been constituted Lord of history, since all power has been committed unto him, and he has received a name above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, and every tongue should confess that he is Lord to the glory of the Father (Matt. 28:18; Phil. 2:10, 11). For Christ is now the ruler of the kings of the earth (Rev. 1:5), and as such he directs the destinies of nations, as well as individuals, unto the coming of his kingdom with power and great glory. For the Father has put all things under his feet, and gave him to be head over all to the church, which is His body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all (Eph. 1:22, 23).

The formulation, *Christ and Culture,*[2] is therefore not only legitimate, but the only proper delineation of the problem. For

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[1] Cf. R. A. Killan, *The Ontological Theology of Paul Tillich* (Kampen, 1956), p. 97ff.

[2] This is the title of two significant treatments of the problem of Christian Culture, one in Dutch by Kl. Schilder, the other in English by H. Richard Niebuhr. Cf. general bibliography.

Christ is the Lord of history, the one in whom and through whom human culture receives its meaning. For he is the mystery of God in whom all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge are hidden (Col. 1:20). Without Christ, who is the redeemer of the cosmos, history is meaningless, but Christ who is the Truth has come to make known the will of the Father. This concerns not merely the redemption of God's elect, although such is the heart of the matter as far as human destiny is concerned, but Christ's message was cosmic in scope. He supplied the meaning of all human culture by pointing to the denouement in judgment, to which all things tend and in which the Father shall vindicate his justice, love, and holiness. If the Existentialists, both philosophic and literary, have been instrumental in pointing up the meaninglessness of existence without God, they have done Christianity a negative service. Although no true diagnosis of man's predicament as being in alienation from God has been given, and hence no remedy is forthcoming, yet Existentialism, after a fashion, has sensed the hopelessness and despair of mankind in its alienation from the source of its being.

According to Scripture, Christ is king not only in his natural prerogative as eternal Logos, co-equal with the Father and the Spirit, but he has been anointed Mediatorial king in virtue of his obedience and sacrifice rendered on Calvary (Ps. 2:6; 45:7; Isa. 9:6, 7; Luke 1:22; John 18:36, 37, etc.). Whereas the first Adam fell into sin and disobedience through the subtlety of Satan, Christ as second Adam fulfilled all righteousness and he finished the work given him by the Father (Matt. 3:1; 3:15; John 17:4). In his office as Mediator, Christ is the Reconciler of the world, the first principle *(arché)* and Logos of history, the *Key to Culture*. For in him the truth and holiness, majesty and glory of God are manifested in and to the world. This, according to Scripture, is the chief end of creation, namely, to manifest the glory and majesty of God. And since the original man, Adam, failed in this respect, the second Adam came to reveal the Father, to render a perfect obedience.

Over his people, whom he redeems and sanctifies, Christ is the spiritual head, so that they, through his Spirit acknowledge him voluntarily as their Lord. This is the spiritual kingship of Christ which he exercises by gathering, governing, sanctifying, and protecting the church, for which he died and of which he is the head (Eph. 1:20-22; 5:23-33). Christ as king is the good shepherd, whose voice the sheep obey (John 10; I Peter 2:25); his kingdom consists of the members of the invisible church who hear the truth (John 18:37), of those who are willing to make every thought captive to the obedience of Christ (II Cor. 10:5). The kingdom of our Lord is broader than the church as a visible organization, although the visible church is one of the most important manifestations of that kingdom in this world. But, as a matter of fact, the citizens of the kingdom of God are also members of families, of societies and nations, and as such they must show their allegiance to the King. This kingdom is both present and future. Although it is a present reality, it is everlasting in character, for of his kingdom there shall be no end (Isa. 9:7; Luke 1:33). At His second coming Christ shall establish his kingdom in peace and righteousness in the new heaven and the new earth, so that it's consummation will be visible and glorious (Luke 22:12, 30; I Cor. 6:9; 15:50; II Tim. 4:18; II Peter 1:11).

Christ as king is both Saviour and Lord; he restores men to the service of God and commands their total allegiance. As prophet he proclaimed the truth of God, but as king he heals the grievous wound of sin, for he is the true miracle worker. By his power not only are man's soul and body healed, saved and restored, but also the entire universe shall one day be restored as a fit habitat for redeemed mankind. This is the true significance of miracle in Scripture. It is a demonstration of the power of God to deliver man from the power of evil and sin, both physically and cosmically. And one day this kingdom shall correspond to the prophetic picture, "They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain; for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of Jehovah as the waters cover the sea" (Isa. 11:9).

Since Christ restores men to the truth, he expects his subjects to be witnesses and contenders for the truth. This is not a matter of preaching the Gospel merely to open men's eyes that they may be turned from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God (Acts 26:18), but this is a matter of cultural struggle. For culture is not merely material, dealing with nature and machines and tools and physical achievements. Culture is also a spiritual enterprise; it is a struggle in the realm of truth and the realm of ideals. In Greek culture the humanistic ideal found expression in the entire range of life. Likewise in the Renaissance, a return to this humanistic ideal brought about a negation of the Christian conception of morality and law and exalted once more the glory of the body, the love for this life, and the gratification of the flesh. But at its very root Calvinism maintains that men are here for the glory of God. If the strength of the Greek conception lay in its unity and consistent application, how much more ought Calvinism with its higher ideal produce a unified world-and-life view and a culture that definitely is committed to the service of its heavenly king!

Now it ought to be self-evident that the "task of Christian culture is to seek the glory of God in patterns of life which are in harmony with His revealed will."[3] This is clearly taught by Paul when he warns believers not to be conformed to this world (Rom. 12:2). The Greek word used by Paul is *schema,* which means pattern. Christians are not to pattern their lives after the cultural patterns of this world. Their love-making may not follow the pattern set by Hollywood, their money-making may not be patterned after the rugged individualism of an unconscionable Capitalism. And this pattern lies not so much in the material that is used or the cut of one's hair or suit but in the spiritual. God, the Lord, who has committed all authority to the Son, through whom he rules all things, has given direction for our love life and our economic life and for the juridical, social, biological, and physical aspects of everyday existence. Christ, the lawgiver in Zion, points to the stringency of the seventh commandment, making no exceptions to the divine law of monogamous matrimony which is for life, except in the case of adultery. The love life between man and woman is a sacred business, because it involves the image of God and the laws of God, but Hollywood spurns the law of God and disdains the sacred image by debasing the love life for economic gain. Can one ever play at love in a Calvinistic culture? Is not the so-called law of art that man may reproduce anything in life in literature, drama, painting, etc., contrary to the law of God concerning matrimony? And what of the third commandment? Here again the dictation of art is that if it is necessary to reproduce a blasphemous character, since real life produces such characters, we may with impunity swear and take the name of God in vain on the stage and in writing a novel, since it is a demand of art. And thus one could continue. Also the sacred worship service is acted out, the blessing of God is pronounced for artistic effect, and mock weddings are quite common even among the godly. My question simply is, whether this is not contrary to the apostolic injunction that we should not be conformed to the patterns of this world.

And speaking of weddings, here especially the lack of a Christian culture is apparent. The stale circus jokes that are dished out for the edification and hilarious response of the guests are suggestive of cheap vaudeville. And the wedding songs sung by the soloists would give the impression that one is in the world, for the culture of the Renaissance with its ideal of *das Eebig Weibliche* is dominant. One of the favorite wedding songs is the English translation of *Ich Liebe Dich,* in which the lover is avowing his love for time and eternity — "I love thee, for time and eternity." But, immediately thereafter, the minister reads the form in which the scriptural doctrine of marriage is set forth and the couple promises to love one another "till death do us part." For in the Christian view of life, human love is for this life; but in eternity God will be all and in all, and the blessed union with the Christ, who is the light of the new Jerusalem, will not tolerate any bigamy of the soul — this present body having been sloughed off and our existence being like that of the angels, in which there is no giving in marriage. How like the Sadducees, who did greatly err, knowing neither the Scriptures nor the power of God (Matt. 22:29).

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[3] Edmund P. Clowney, "Transmitting Christian Culture," in *Christian Home and School,* Nov., 1952, p. 18.

Now if the kingship of Christ is real to the believer, and if it is true that the Christian shares in the anointing of Christ so that he as king fights against the devil and all his hosts in this world (Q. 32, *Heid. Cat.*), there ought to be some clear evidence of this warfare that is going on. To restrict this warfare to the area of the soul, to the conflict within against the wiles of the devil, and to the mortification of the old man, is certainly an unwarranted assumption. And, furthermore, to contend that this conflict between the two kingdoms comes to expression fully in the individual witness that Christ demands of those who would be his disciples is an illegitimate conclusion. In the great spiritual warfare the forces of darkness are organized against the Lord and his anointed. Any organization that claims to be neutral, as do the public schools and some labor organizations, is by that token denying Christ's claims of absolute lordship over all things. As such they are serving the cause of the antichrist. To deny this is either wilfull blindness or woeful ignorance of the devil's devices and the claims of Christ.

It may be true enough that one cannot tell the difference between a car or a house built by non-Christian workmen and one produced by confessors of Christ, although this is certainly a debatably issue if one considers the thing ideally, but the total culture of a people is not determined by the number of cars they build, but the spiritual motivation and the ideals that govern the lives of the builders and users of cars. It is clear that a non-Christian labor union is thoroughly humanistic in its aims and ideals, its purpose being simply to improve working conditions for the men, but, most of all, to get all it can and give as little as possible. Such is the mind of the godless labor union leaders, which has so thoroughly proliferated down to the rank and file that *LIFE* magazine editor, Luce, warns his fellow Americans that unless they have a change of mind and seek to produce for the sake of excellence, America will soon lose its dominant place in the world. This is the age of "the goof-off" in which the job is only half-done and everyone seeks more leisure. As a result money wage rates have increased "nearly twice as fast as productivity."[4] *LIFE* further quotes Daniel Bell of *Fortune,* who finds that American workers today are obsessed by a desire to evade work, and suggests that although Puritan and Calvinistic motives for hard work have dwindled, common sense can supply reasons just as strong *(Op. cit.)*. But this is exactly the point at issue! It is the contention of this book that religious apostasy and decadence of spiritual energy will result in cultural decadence and demoralization. And the *pursuit of excellence,* which is being proposed as a complementary goal to the pursuit of happiness by the Rockefeller Report on Education, and is cordially seconded by the editor of *LIFE,* is a travesty rather than a substitute for the *fear of the Lord,* which moved our Calvinistic Puritans and Pilgrims.

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[4] "Age of Goof-off or of Plenty," *LIFE,* July, 1958, p. 24.

If Christ truly is king, then his subjects must claim him as their Lord, and acknowledge that kingship, not only in church and one day a week in their life of devotion and acts of worship, but in the field of labor relations and in everyday work. Of course, this does not mean that a Christian cannot work for a non-Christian, as Paul plainly teaches, for else, says he, you would have to go out of this world (I Cor. 5:10). But working for unbelievers and with unbelievers is something quite different from joining voluntarily in an organization that ignores Christ's claims and sets up thoroughly humanistic and humanitarian ideals. This puts the Christian at a distinct disadvantage, and his witness for Christ is dimmed by the fact that he is counted with the enemies of the cross of Christ. In the Old Testament, God warned against this when he sent the prophet Jehu to Jehoshaphat saying, "Shouldest thou help the ungodly and love them that hate the Lord?" (II Chron. 19:2). But Paul gives a more specific precept when he commands in the name of the ascended King, "Be not unequally yoked with unbelievers; for what fellowship have righteousness and iniquity? or what communion hath light with darkness? And what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what portion hath a believer with an unbeliever?" (II Cor. 6:14, 15). Dr. Warfield, that eminent theologian and acute apologist for the faith, interprets this to mean that we may not accept the yoke of the unbeliever in the sense that we are harnessed to the same godless philosophy. But it does not mean that if the unbeliever will work on our presuppositions and does not object to our interpretation of reality in which common work is done (cultural projects and any of the ordinary labor of man under the sun), that a Christian may not work with or live with men of the world.[5] It is simply a matter of not having fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness in which the godless unions of our time are engaged. And by this I do not mean merely the violence and Sabbath desecration, but the basis of operation which denies the Christ of God and his claim to the service and love of mankind.

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[5] B. B. Warfield, *Faith and Life* (London, 1916), pp. 243-58.

Against this interpretation it has been alleged that one may not simply, literally quote Scripture as though that were the end of the matter. This is altogether too simplistic an approach, it is averred. And with the *"Dooddoener"* (death-dealing blow) that this is biblicism and fundamentalism, the opposition rids itself of a serious consideration of the claims of Christ. But if one may not quote Paul in this fashion, when the text in question is quite in line with the *analogia Scripturae* (the total teaching of the Word of God), then of what use is the Word as a light upon one's path and a lamp before his feet? And what of the use that our Lord himself made of the Scriptures when he put Satan to flight with his thrice repeated, "It is written"? It is to be feared that this fear of Fundamentalism is going to land the Reformed Churches in the Liberal camp where reading the Bible and making a literal application is taboo. However, it is a strange phenomenon that, inasfar as liberals want to use the Bible for their ethical systems and their humanitarian ideals, they cannot get away from reading the words of Jesus literally.

Again, the idea that Christ's kingship as confessed by Calvinists requires an organization in the field of labor is said to be an importation from The Netherlands, and, presumably, an indigenous plant that will not thrive elsewhere. However, this is begging the question. The argument, indeed, is that due to a historical development it is possible to have political parties and labor unions expressing ideologies and based on Christian principles in the Netherlands, but since the historical development of America has been different, excluding such religious colorings from the labor and political issues, we cannot now introduce them without creating disharmony in our national culture. Now this is exactly the point at issue! The introduction of Christian principles into the labor picture will bring disharmony and probably cause a crisis because there is no real neutrality with respect to the Christ of God. The so-called neutral unions are against the biblical principles of truth and righteousness. The very idea that no religious considerations are permissable in the establishing of a labor union or joining such an organization is of the anti-Christ. The forswearing of every other allegiance to be true to the vows made to one's fellow-members, also points to a basic religious commitment, which denies the claims of Christ. But this is exactly the prediction of the Spirit, speaking through Simeon, that the Redeemer-Renewer of culture would be a sign that would be repudiated (Luke 2:34). And this repudiation does not come merely from the side of modern Jewish scholars, who try to justify the crime of their forefathers in crucifying the Lord of Glory on the ground that he was a threat to Jewish culture.[6] There are many among the nominal church members of our day who, on the ground that Christ refused to be a divider or lands, maintain that he was either anti-cultural or culturally neutral. However, our Lord proclaimed a cure for the evils of a materialistic culture when he affirmed that a man's life does not consist of the abundance of the things he possesses (Luke 12:15). Neither does Christ's emphasis on the kingdom of heaven, which requires love to God and the neighbor, abstract religion from ethics and the social life of man. Rather did he lay the only lasting foundation for a truly human community, one in which man is restored to the service of God according to the creation cultural ordinance.

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[6] H. R. Niebuhr, *Christ and Culture* (New York, 1951), p. 2, where the author cites the work of Joseph Klausner, *Jesus of Nazareth,* to this effect.

It is instructive and interesting on this point to consult T. S. Eliot, who has at least given this problem the benefit of some soul-searching thought. For him the difference between a neutral and a pagan society is of minor importance,[7] but, he warns that the pagan conception of life is fast gaining the predominance. This is one of the results of religious liberalism, which moves away from religion and tries to establish a culture without its proper foundation, contributing thereby to the uprootedness of Western civilization. "The liberal notion that religion was a matter of private belief and of conduct in private life, and that there is no reason why Christians should not be able to accommodate themselves to any world which treated them good-naturedly, is becoming less and less tenable" (*Op. cit.,* pp. 19, 20). Eliot proceeds to point out that a Christian unaware of the problem of leading a Christian life in a non-Christian society is progressively being de-Christianized by all sorts of unconscious pressures that operate upon him through the media of culture. But Eliot is not satisfied to remain on the defensive; he would establish a Christian society in which the general ethos of the people is guided by Christian categories. "We must abandon the notion that the Christian should be content with freedom of culture. ... However bigoted the announcement may sound, the Christian can be satisfied with nothing less than a Christian organization of society ... which is not the same thing as a society consisting exclusively of devout Christians" (*Op. cit.,* p. 33). In such a society education must be directed by a Christian philosophy of life and democracy must be transformed by a religious content. It is not enthusiasm but dogma that distinguishes Christianity from paganism. According to Eliot, the church cannot keep on evangelizing the world without changing its culture. It is the duty of the church to "struggle for a condition of society which will give the maximum of opportunity for others to become Christians" (*Op. cit.,* p. 97).

Here we have it in a nutshell. Eliot, who has the long tradition of the Church of England and its Calvinistic creed, is thinking along the same lines as Dutch Calvinists who sought to establish the doctrines of Scripture as evaluated by Calvin and Augustine. However, Eliot puts the cart before the horse when he says that man receives the grace of God by humility, charity, and purity. And there are many other aspects of his thought to which this writer would not subscribe, since Eliot still stands in the liberal tradition with respect to the importance of doctrine and the matter of subscribing to the orthodox faith.[8] But on the formal question of the need of a Christian culture in order that the Christian faith may survive and that civilization may survive one can have no quarrel with him.

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[7] *The Idea of a Christian Society* (New York, 1940), pp. 4, 5.

To confess Christ as Saviour from sin, but to deny his relevance and power in the realm of culture, is a denial of his kingship over the believer and over the world. For in Christ as the God-man, the miracle of the wholly sound, ideal man appears in the history of humanity. And the promise of the Gospel is that Christ restores those who share in his anointing, so that they become once again a kingdom of priests unto their God. Thus Christ saves creation initially by restoring the cultural agent to a new obedience. For man is the crown of creation, a little lower than God, having dominion over all the works of God (Ps. 8). And as such Christ is the transformer of culture, as Schilder maintains, for he is creating here and now, in this present evil world a kingdom of truth. This is that *civitas Dei,* of which Augustine wrote. For this Calvin gave his full measure of devotion is transforming Geneva from an immoral cesspool to a model of Christian living, according to contemporary witnesses. For if man, the producer of culture, is a restored prophet, priest and king, his culture must of necessity also be renewed. For this is the new obedience to which Christ calls his followers since they are in the world, although not of the world. Believers as restored creatures are called along with the rest of mankind to engage in cultural activity, in which they present their whole being as a living sacrifice unto God (Rom. 12:2). On the other hand, the church as church is given the missionary mandate; such is her calling as organized institution recognizing the kingship of Christ.

Calvinists, then, under the kingship of Christ confessedly possess a global view of culture as an all-encompassing task to bring all things to the obedience of Christ, since he has given the assurance, "All things are yours, and ye are Christ's and Christ is God's" (I Cor. 3:22). Hence Schilder is right in holding that the believer must not approach the problem of culture on the basis that we still have so much good in the world in spite of sin but rather from the viewpoint that Christ as king restores us to our original heritage as cultural creatures. However, due to sin, mankind is now in an antithetical situation in which the unity of the human race has been destroyed. And the confession that God has an attitude of favor toward all men, so that he restrains sin and gives them as cultural creatures the ability to do moral and civil good, ought not to be abused. For then the recruits of Christ lose sight of the cultural antithesis created by the restorative and regenerative power of the Son of God through the Spirit.

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[8] Cf. J. Gresham Machen, *Christianity and Liberalism* (Grand Rapids, 1946), Chapter One.

Furthermore, we confess that Christ is king of the rulers of the earth in his capacity as Mediator. He now has all power in his hands, and directs the destinies of nations, and is the one through whom the Father rules all things. In other words, the only-begotten of the Father is now, until the end of time as a reward for his obedience, exercising the divine prerogative of directing the affairs of God, since all authority has been committed to him in heaven and on earth. This power is exercised for promoting the growth, purification, and final perfection of the church, which he has purchased with his own blood (Acts 20:28). He shall rule over the nations with a rod of iron (Ps. 2:9) and those that walk in pride he is able to abase (Dan. 4:37). He shall render vengeance to them that know not God and that obey not the Gospel of our Lord Jesus, even "eternal destruction from the face of the Lord and from the glory of His might, when He shall come to be glorified in His saints, and to be marveled at in all them that believed . . . in that day" (II Thess. 1:8, 9).

This kingship was promised as a reward of Christ's work in this world and was bestowed at the ascension, when Christ was exalted to the right hand of God, the Father. But it will come to an end when the power of the devil and his works shall have been destroyed and the authority is returned to the Father, that God may be all and in all (I Cor. 15:24-28).

Now this kingship over the world of men and the world at large is also of the greatest importance for culture indirectly. For on the basis of his absolute authority over all the world, Christ commands his church to make disciples of all nations (Matt. 28:18). However, once a disciple is made a Christian, his culture must develop on the basis of the new evaluation of life and the world. This receives clear historical proof from the power of the Gospel in the first centuries of the Christian era and the dominant Christian culture in Western Europe during the Middle Ages. Or one can point to the resurgence of Christian culture due to the Protestant Reformation, especially as it came to expression in the countries where Calvinism became dominant.[9] For in the Christian faith the service of God became the dominant tone of culture and the service of man the subsidiary ideal. Emil Brunner, in the *Preface* to his Gifford Lectures, states as his conviction "that only Christianity is capable of furnishing the basis of a civilization which can rightly be described as human."[10] The rationale for this faith is the Christian conviction that man was created in the image of God, and, as such, had an eternal destiny. This high view of man produced what may be called the Christian civilization of the West. In it are involved both aspects of Christ's kingship. The fact that his followers went forth as directed and preached the Gospel in all the world as it became accessible to the emissaries of the cross, and the fact that Christ by his power rules over the kings of the earth and thus made possible the advance of the Christian church — these together account for the Christian civilization of the West.

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[9] Chapters of Augustine, Calvin, Kuyper or any historical treatment of Calvinism such as that of Dakin, McNeill, Praamsma.

That kingship seemingly has gone into eclipse, and men have been asking, "What on earth is God doing these days?" However, the crisis in Western civilization which resulted from the renunciation of Christianity in the Renaissance, Enlightenment, and the Revolution (1789), brought the harvest of an inhuman, lawless, depersonalized collectivism. This is now leading mankind and shaping history for the final denouement when the king shall destroy his adversaries with the breath of his mouth (II Thess. 2:8). For the preaching of the Gospel will not bring in the kingdom of peace and righteousness imperceptibly and gradually, but, on the contrary, the apostasy of the last times will be great, and Christ will introduce his kingdom of glory with cataclysmic events of cosmic proportions (Matt. 24:6-12, 21, 22; Luke 18:8; 21:25-28; II Tim. 3-1-13; Rev. 13; Heb. 12:26, 27; II Pet. 3:10-13).

Now the glory of the Christian life is that Christ's kingship is confessed and his precepts are obeyed voluntarily by those who have been restored to the Father. And, in all the cultural striving of the recruits of Christ, there is this avowed purpose to press everything into the service of the King — to seek first his kingdom and his righteousness. The Christian who is in the world is nevertheless not of the world. Therefore, he can have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, the lust of the flesh and of the eyes, the pride of life as expressed in the carnal literature, or salacious movies, pornographic photography, lewd songs and shows, blasphemous dramas, and the vain philosophy of the day. The kingship of Christ further militates against such evils as divorce, unscriptural birth control and artificial insemmination, which tend to destroy the institution of the family, which Christ came to restore to its fullness in the plan of God. And in the social relationships of life the kingship is also acknowledged so that the class hatred of communism and the depersonalizing collectivism of socialism is seen as a destruction of man as creature of God in society. But the Christian realizes that he cannot make the world perfect here and now. He is not blinded by utopianism, but he seeks to make all things subject to the rule of Christ, full well realizing that the kingdom of peace and righteousness cannot be established in this world of sin. The Christian by his culture does not expect to build a perfect world; he is not a cultural optimist, but a realist living by faith in the Word. This keeps him from pessimism since he is anticipating the glorious day when the creature shall be delivered from the bondage of this corruption, when all things shall be renewed and the tabernacle of God shall be with men. Hence he remains steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, foreasmuch as he knows that his labor is not in vain in the Lord (I Cor. 15:58). This glorious faith is based on the confession of the kingship of Christ, to whom the Father has committed all power in heaven and upon earth!

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[10] *Christianity and Civilization* (New York, 1948), p. V.

CHAPTER XV

CALVINISTIC CULTURE AND CHRISTIAN CALLING

There is an old Dutch proverb to the effect that work is for the stupid *(Het werk is voor de dommen)*, which denominates labor as a necessary evil. This was certainly the view of the Greeks in the classical period. They considered work degrading and worthy only of slaves. They held that a free man must lead a spiritual existence which is creative, without the necessity of labor for the preservation of physical life. Augustine, as we have seen, did not escape this pagan thought, and in the Middle Ages it was perpetuated in the feudal class structure of society, in which the spiritual activity of the clergy forms the apex of social grace. The duality of matter and spirit is thus carried through in Western culture so that manual work is considered "low," whereas cultural, creative activity is "high."

However, the advent of the industrial revolution and capitalism has brought about the economic organization of society with its emphasis on production. This was abetted by the Marxian myth that the working man is the real source of wealth, and by the economic theory of history, according to which the leisure of the few is seen as the exploitation of the many. Cultural creativity was a parasitic luxury at the expense of the dreadful drudgery of the mass man. The practical result in America is that the milkman is more important than the school teacher and a Chicago garbage collector receives a higher remuneration than most college professors. However, although in the communistic hierarchy of values the laboring man is the ideal bearer of civilization, the basic thought that the economic values are the highest in the world is not really an invention of Marx, but the result of the secularization that followed the Renaissance, and it is a concomitant of Naturalism. For if there be no higher goal than to eat and drink and be merry, if man is basically an earthworm or higher animal that merely returns to the dust, why should not the question of food and drink and animal comfort become the obsession of man's mind. If money rules the world because it buys what man wants to "enjoy" in this life, then certainly we ought to give some honor to Marx, who opined that the many ought to own the means of production and by that token share in the fruits of production.

On this basis there is a materialistic rationale for the necessity of work, namely, in order to eat. Man does not eat in order to live, but he lives to eat and to consume, and he works in order to fulfill his desires in the realm of animal appetites and the lusts of the flesh. Whereas the Greek philosophy called the body the prison of the soul, and manual labor was considered degrading, only worthy of slaves, the modern secularist outlook worships the body and is willing that man become an economic slave in order to have security for the body and its needs. In the Middle Ages there was a false mystical idealism which overemphasized the spiritual at the expense of the body and natural life of man. The church recommended the ascetic mode of life as a means of attaining the ideal of higher spiritual culture, but is succeeded only in dividing life into the sacred and secular, the holy and the profane. Consequently, no true understanding of calling in the biblical sense was taught. The life of the common man was a weary round of drudgery relieved only by the holy days of the church, which became the holidays of the laity, as witness *Mardi Gras.*

All this was changed by the Protestant Reformation. Luther and Calvin proclaimed the freedom of the common man as one who had an office from God. It was not merely the priest who had a holy calling but every man stood before the face of God (*Institutes,* III, 10, 6) . For every man in Christ is a restored prophet, priest and king, an officer of God in the world. And since God made man a living soul, his body and spirit both express the divine image; hence the labor of his hands, the work of the body, even the functions of the body are not sinful or evil. For Paul calls on men to present their bodies a living sacrifice unto God, which is their reasonable service (Rom. 12:1) . This is not an ascetic depreciation of the body or the economic function of physical labor, but rather a recognition of the spiritual value of the whole man. Hence every person has a calling and none is low or base. For "Every man's mode of life, therefore, is a kind of station assigned him by the Lord, that he may not always be driven about at random . . . it is enough to know that in everything the call of the Lord is the foundation and beginning of right action. He who does not act with reference to it will never, in the discharge of duty, keep the right path" *(Ibid.).* Under this conception the work of the housemaid, dusting the floor or pouring milk from her pitcher (cf. Vermeer's *Melkmeisje*) , is not inferior to that of the artist; and the work of the cobbler is just as ennobling as that of the bridge builder as long as men work unto the Lord, from a sense of the divine vocation. But, just as the absence of male and female as classes in the order of salvation (Gal. 3:28) does not eliminate their respective stations in life (Eph. 5:22-33) , so the equality of divine calling between milk-maid and artist does not eliminate a difference in social function. The evaluation of work is not on the basis of *what* a man does, but on the *why* and the *how* of his doing. This constitutes a truly religious interpretation of work, which in turn depends on a Christian anthropology. And the latter, in turn, cannot be conceived of without the entire Christian understanding of God, man and the universe. In short, the doctrine of creation, providence, and redemption are all presuppositions of the Calvinistic conception of Christian vocation. And the essense of that concept is that man's cultural activity, his conquest of nature, is the service of God.

Creation implies calling. Man receives meaning in existence by his service of God. As God's representative in a Paradise without gates, man was called to serve his Maker by exercising dominion over the earth in the name of God. The Bible teaches us that this ideal was lost through sin, so that man henceforth sought self and divorced his culture from religion, or rather made it his religion, divorcing his work from the service of God. But Christ as whole man, that is, sinless and completely integrated in the service of God, came as Mediator to restore lost humanity to its lost vocation. To this end he reconciled man to God and now rules the world with a sharp sword and is treading the winepress of the fierceness of the wrath of God (Rev. 19:15, 16). But he rules his people with justice through his Word and Spirit. Thus they are restored through Christ's Spirit, so that they are again anointed to the threefold office of prophet, priest, and king. Man is thus a new creature, responsive to his high calling in Christ. This sense of vocation, then, is the fruit of regeneration and restoration to the fellowship of God. For all those that are in Christ not only shall be made alive (I Cor. 15:22) at his second coming, they are now truly alive, they have everlasting life, through faith in his name (John 17:3). For the Sun of righteousness has arisen with healing in his wings (Mal. 4:2) to all those that fear his name, since he has appeared to reconcile all things to the Father. Therefore, the Logos-Mediator-King is the presupposition, the Saviour and Transformer of culture. For he makes out of men what they were in the beginning — children of God, which in itself constitutes the greatest cultural transformation. For thus man, who is a stranger to himself and knows not the purpose of his being or of his sojourn here on earth, learns the true purpose of his being and knows himself through his knowledge of God. In a crooked and perverse generation in this present evil world, Christ by the power of God, recreates and transforms men and women to the purity and perfection of the new man, which was created in righteousness and holiness of truth (Eph. 4:15).

It is Christ who brings man back to his rightful owner and restores him to his covenant relationship of having fellowship with the Father. And Christ as the second Adam is the great Canon of Culture. He placed himself over against the tradition of the elders and the decrees of Moses and said: "But I say unto you," so that the people realized that he spake with authority and not as the scribes. However, not one jot or one tittle of the law did he abrogate; but he came to fulfill, not to destroy the law. And he called on every created workman to present the sum total of all the accrued interest on his labor to the great Father-Employer-Judge. Christ spoke the parable of the talents at the end of his ministry and prayed the Father in his great official prayer that he would not take his co-laborers out of the world, but that he would preserve them from the evil one. For the service of God does not consist of taking refuge in a cloister or withdrawing oneself within the robes of his self-content and letting the rest of the world to its own devices, but it consists in cultivating the ground, developing the earth, being fruitful and having dominion over the earth. To this *abc* of man's duty in this world Christ restored all those who share in his anointing. The world as created was an unfinished symphony. God called man, his cultural creature and co-worker, to take up the work and bring it to the fulness of that perfection which God had placed in it as promise.

Now the glory of man, as Schilder reminds us, was this, that he was not only a letter in the great book of nature, but also lector-interpreter, one who can think God's thoughts after him. As true prophet he knew the truth in the beginning; as restored prophet, Christ is made unto him wisdom from God (I Cor. 1:30). The Calvinist confesses that man though finite was originally so instructed of God that he knew the true meaning of his existence and his relationship to God and the world. The Calvinist rejects the Lessing spirit which magnified the search for truth but despairs of ever finding it. But he insists that man must ever remain a humble re-interpreter of reality; he must be willing to live by revelation. God is the only original interpreter and, therefore, the final reference point of the truth. He gives meaning to every fact. Man as cultural creature in his office of prophet must learn to understand the meaning that God has given in his work through his word, and by diligent researches into the mysteries of creation. But man must ever be willing to remain a willing child who loves the Father and works for his glory. This involves the priesthood of the believer. For as priest he brings himself as a living sacrifice and articulates the praises of the Giver of every good and perfect gift. As such he does not imitate Nebuchadnezzar or Hitler and say, "Look at this great Babylon-Berlin that I have built!" but he keeps on cultivating, building; developing, and exploiting the earth for God's sake. And the self-culture in which the Christian engages is not for the sake of becoming some brilliant personality in his own right, but in order that all his talents, now latent and undeveloped, may be brought to their full fruition unto the glory of God. The real trouble with the self-culture of the world is that it degenerates into the idolatry of worshipping the creature instead of the creator. This is the essence of Hollywood's glorification of man's body, male and female, and of sex, which is found more or less in every colony of artists. The sinner refuses to remain a *letter* in God's book, setting forth his praise; instead, he seeks glory and honor for himself. But there is a culture of and development of the self for the unfolding of the office which God has given man, namely, to have dominion and rule in the name of God. To this glorious end the intent of God in creation must be ascertained from reading the book of nature, so that its laws become known and subservient to the will of man. For knowledge truly is power, as Bacon said, but that power must be dedicated to the service of God.

Although man is a unity and his faculties and functions cannot be divided, only abstracted for scientific understanding, it is in the realm of power especially that man's culture comes to expression. For man, by the development of his own physical, mental, and artistic power, his creativeness and the application of that power to the universe, produces culture. And here lies the true motivation for work. Work is not merely a necessity in order that man may eat and live, a kind of necessary evil to which all are subjected by an impersonal fate, but it is the joyful calling of man, the cultural creature, whereby he expresses his understanding of reality as prophet, whereby he gives himself in living service to fulfill the end of his creation as priest, and whereby he exercises power and dominion in the name of his great Taskmaster, whose he is and whom he serves. Work, then, is not a result of sin and a hindrance to man's joy, but it is the substance of his service to God, which is man's chief joy. And the modern phenomenon of the mass-man turning away from work except as cruel necessity and wearisome drudgery is the result of the secularizing spirit, which denies God's claim to man's love and service and sets up man as the end-all and be-all of the universe. Thus the decadence of religion spells cultural decadence. For in spite of the instruments of war and of music that the sons of Lamech devised, which constitute material culture, the human family was degenerating – witness Lamech's bigamy – while fratricide was glorified and violence and cruelty characterized the culture of that day, for which the first world was destroyed by the Flood. The true culture to which God calls the human race through his injunctions to Adam and Noah (cf. Gen. 9:1ff.) is constructive, not destructive; it brings to maturity and fruition, but does not corrupt and demoralize. Our false culture today is mighty with machines, but produces economic slaves instead of joyful sons of God. We have, indeed, to a great extent been successful in the conquest of nature, but now man is a mere cog in the machine that he has created. And it is "the great illusion of our day that the nationalization or socialization of industry would do away with impersonalism and exploitation."[1] As long as the sense of calling and of obligation to God is lacking, the joy of work will not be brought back by any collectivist society; all it can achieve is more effective industrial slavery, as Orwell so dramatically sets forth in his 1984.

Just as the introduction of Christianity by Paul to Rome, which was suffering from an effete and decadent culture, brought about a revolution in culture; and, just as the Protestant Reformation, after the sterility of feudalistic society had brought the common man to a state of servility and cultural degradation, revolutionized and revitalized the culture of the West, so now the Western world is at an impásse and in need of new life. "A true solution can only come through a return to that conception of work which the gospel alone can give – the conception that work, whatever it may be, is the service of God and of the community and therefore the expression of man's dignity" (*Op. cit.*). This dignity is not inherent in man as a quality of his being, but proceeds from his relationship to his Maker, whose representative and officer of the day he is. And in the sense of calling man becomes aware of this dignity bestowed by the creator. He senses the joy of corresponding to his purpose as God's workman, imitating the creator who rejoiced in his creative artistry. For the great Architect and Artist has formed all things good and beautiful in their time (Eccl. 3:11).

By divine vocation the Calvinist means that work and culture are not a *may,* but a *must.* The Christian does not engage in culture because there is still so much good in this world in spite of sin, or because he has so much in common with the world that lies in darkness, but it is a question of Christian obedience, or of calling. As such the believer does not see himself primarily as "enjoyer-appreciator" of the good and the beautiful, but as the developer-exploiter of the good earth for God.[2] For some it seems inevitable, as redeemed of the Lord, to center their minds so exclusively upon the cross of Christ that they forget their cultural calling. This certainly was not the approach of Old Testament saints or the writers of the New Testament – witness Paul's exhortation to slaves to remain content in their calling and his continued emphasis on the necessity of each fulfilling his calling as unto the Lord. John the Baptist, who still stood in the old dispensation, cautioned mercenary troops to be content with their wages, not to seek release from their particular calling after they were converted (Luke 3:14). Neither did Peter advise Simon the tanner, or Cornelius, the centurion, to leave their respective vocations and become full-time workers in the kingdom. Conversion does not absolve a wife from her wifely and motherly duties and routine. Paul urges all to work with their hands and to live soberly in their various vocations (I Thess. 4:11, 12; II Thess. 3:10-12), each working with quietness, eating his own bread. Therefore the Calvinist does not become one-sidedly Christological and soteriological in his interpretation of man's Christian calling, but he continues to make the doctrines of creation and providence part of his working capital. He does not believe, as some other Christians seem to do, that God now excuses believers from their cultural calling due to the urgency of the missionary mandate, which calls the church to make disciples of all nations.

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[1] E. Brunner, *Christianity and Civilization,* Vol. II (New York, 1948), p. 67.

[2] Klaas Schilder, *Wat is de Hemel?* (Kampen, 1935), p. 284.

The relationship of the cultural calling, which comes to all men in virtue of creation, from which the Christian is not exempt, to the missionary mandate that comes to the church of the New Testament, is indeed a serious and acute problem for those who seek to know the will of God. As creature and image-bearer man is called to replenish the earth, to subdue it and have dominion over it; as new creature in Christ, the Christian is called to make disciples of all nations, teaching them to observe all things which Christ has commanded. The solution, as this author sees it, is to be found in two factors that appear interwoven with the facts. The one is that Jesus did not call all men as individuals to the special task of being fishers of men, the modern contention that every Christian must be a missionary, to the contrary notwithstanding. Christ called the twelve to be fishers of men and made them apostles (John 1:37-51; Matt. 4:18-22; 10:1-16); he also called seventy to go before his face into every place, whither he himself would come (Luke 10:1). In the latter connection he told one of those whom he would recruit for this task to let the dead bury their dead, "But go thou and preach the kingdom of God" (Luke 9:60). In other words, this man had to give up his earthly calling and to forsake all for the sake of preaching the kingdom, to publish abroad the message of the gospel. But this was not the universal requirement of discipleship. And although all the apostles were presumed to be qualified and set apart for special preaching missions, the first Gentile church did not endeavor to send all its converts out to teach the nations, but, at the behest of the Spirit they separated Paul and Barnabas (later this team split into two and consequently two teams went forth) from among their own local teachers and prophets (all were not teachers and prophets) to the work to which the Spirit had called them (Acts 13:1-3). Neither Christ himself, nor any of his apostles, ever intimated that every believer had to be a missionary. Indeed, the term "missionary" in the New Testament has the special connotation of one who is sent by the church to seek those that are without. However, the love of Christ also constrains every Christian to give vocal witness to lost sinners and to call them to repentance. Hence the missionary mandate is fulfilled by those who have a cultural calling.

In the second place, there is a difference in the two mandates as to character of their addressees. The cultural mandate is addressed to every man through the representative head Adam, and after the Flood, Noah, whereas the missionary mandate is addressed to the church of Jesus Christ as organism, addressed through its office-bearers who were present at the ascension. That this was the plain understanding of the disciples is clear from the fact that they always deputized certain teachers and prophets and apostles for the task of evangelization, but never thought of this as the task of every one in the church. And every one was not qualified by the Spirit as were Stephen, Paul, Barnabas, Silas, nor were they all accredited as were Timothy by the laying on of the hands of the presbytery. A parallel to this interpretation of what to some seems a paradox — namely, the calling to culture and the call to preach the Gospel, is found in the prohibition against murder and the command of the Lord to execute his wrath upon evildoers to the point of capital punishment. The solution is simple. God forbids man as individual to take the life of his fellow-man; the sixth commandment as well as the word prohibiting the shedding of blood addressed to Noah and his sons, and Paul's exhortation to Christians not to avenge themselves, are all addressed to man as individual. All men are responsible to God for the life of their fellow-men. But in addition God has established governments on account of the depravity of mankind, "to the end that the dissoluteness of men might be restrained."[3] And to mankind as social entity, as generically conceived, God said that whosoever shed man's blood by man shall his blood be shed (Gen. 9:6). Furthermore, the murderer and evildoer must be executed according to the law of Moses; and through Paul God assures us that the government carries the sword not in vain but he is a minister of God to execute wrath upon the evildoer (Rom. 13:1-7). The two divine injunctions, therefore, are not contradictory, but the one is addressed to man as individual in society while the other is addressed to society as a whole. In like manner the two mandates, cultural and missionary, are not in contradiction the one to the other, so that the Christian is disobeying the one while he obeys the other. But the Calvinist believes that believers must fulfill both mandates. However, the one comes to him from God as creator of heaven and earth simply in virtue of his creaturehood to which he is restored through Christ. Thus he can function as God's image-bearer in society to fulfill the cultural mandate to the glory of God. The other mandate is addressed to the church as body of Christ and comes to the believer in virtue of his new creation in Christ. But the church executes this mandate, as did Antioch in Pisidia in the days of Paul, choosing and sending whom it believes to be accredited and qualified by the Spirit. But every Christian in his cultural pursuit as member of the church of Jesus Christ is supporting that special work of the church with his prayers, with his offerings, with his whole being since he offers his body as a living sacrifice unto God. In short, he is a dedicated man. He works with all his might as unto the Lord, in a double sense. For in his cultural labors he seeks to fulfill the will of God by functioning in the realm of power, controlling nature and men for God's sake, in humble obedience to the divine mandate. But further, all the produce of his brain and brawn is dedicated to the coming of Christ's kingdom; he does not call anything his own, but holds all his goods in common as far as the needs of the kingdom are concerned. He considers himself merely a steward of what God has given him and directs his affairs with the utmost perspicuity and efficiency since he is managing a part of the estate of the heavenly Father to whom all things belong, whose he is and whom he serves. The Calvinistic doctrine of vocation, therefore, lifts men out of the drudgery and serfdom of economic necessity and transforms them into a kingdom of priests unto God. This is the Christian liberty of which Calvin spoke so pungently and inimitably.

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[3] *Belgic Confession,* Art. 26, in *Psalter Hymnal,* (Grand Rapids, 1934), Liturgical Section, p. 19.

There is no suggestion in the foregoing paragraphs that Christians are to divorce their cultural labors from the cross of Christ or to bifurcate their lives into two parallel segments, the one cultural and the other religious. This whole book, is, in fact, a passionate protest against that very thing. And the kingship of Christ in the life of the believer would preclude that solution. Neither has one Christian been called to culture and the other to missionary endeavor. The point that the author has been trying to make is that every Christian is as a matter of fact fulfilling both callings, but that there is a certain division of labor. However, as was indicated before, the missionary is bringing a new culture indirectly, that is, a Christian culture, to replace the pagan culture, when men are made through his preaching new creatures in Christ. But beyond all that, since Christ has judged the world by his cross (John 12:31), the cultural labors of Christians cannot but reflect that judgment upon the world. And the cross-bearing, to which the Christ calls his followers, is not restricted to personal injury or insult due to faithful witnessing for Christ, or due to one's religious life in the narrow cultic sense, for the Christian's cultural labors belong to the Christian's career of witnessing and cross-bearing. The antithesis between cross-bearers and bearers of culture among Christians is a false one, since all Christians are by the fact of regeneration bearers of an alien culture, in the eyes of the world. They are peculiar in the eyes of the world. They are an holy nation, a people for God's own possession (I Peter 2:9). For this the world hates the Christian and his culture. For if men confess as their motivation the love of God and maintain the law of God as their norm, while proclaiming the glory of God the goal of their cultural striving, they will be the laughing stock of the world. For one's culture is always the expression of one's status in the covenant, which regulates man's relationship to God. And those who break the covenant and live in enmity against God cannot look with favor on those who submit their lives to the will of God, for thus they would condemn themselves.

Moreover, cross-bearing also has a subjective reference in the life of the Christian. For even in the fulfillment of his cultural calling the believer is bound to mortify the deeds of the flesh and to crucify his old nature, although certainly not in the dialectial sense that all creaturehood as such lies under judgment. But even the Christian's cultural striving always has a tendency to become work righteousness. It is apt to degenerate into egotistic self-seeking in which Christ is no longer honored. Then a new tower of Babel emerges under the flag of Christianity, not defying God to his face but glorifying man's work for God in self-righteous complacency. Therefore the believer's cultural striving must ever be judged on the basis of the norm of the Word. Of it he must learn to say with Paul, "The good that I would, I do not; but the evil that I would not, that I do." Hence the cultural striving of believers must ever be a self-denying, obedient fulfillment of the will of God for Christ's sake.

Reference was made above to the distribution of talent for which every individual is responsible to give an account of the use to which he has put his capital. But, it ought to be remembered, regeneration and the redirection of the sinner's life do not increase or diminish the number of talents he has received. This, no doubt, in part accounts for the scientific achievements of Christian civilization. Brunner affirms that the motive of subordinating all human activity to the glory of God "has been a directing force of creativity in the highest degree. The history of culture in the early Christian, in the medieval, in the Reformation and post-Reformation times is one great proof of that thesis."[4]

And although Calvinism holds this motivation in common with all the other branches of the Christian church, its distinction lies in the fact that it has more self-consciously made the goal of God's glory the true motivation of Christian vocation. Luther, indeed, did magnify Christian calling over against the medieval depreciation of the natural life of man. But he tempered this by saying that the Gospel had nothing to do with the things of the world, affecting souls only. Therefore Luther was perfectly willing to turn the interests of the present life over to the worldly authorities, kings and princes. Consequently, for politics and science and culture in general the supreme authority was not sought in the Word but in reason and tradition. It is not hard to see that the modern man's secular urge to free culture, not merely from the tutelage of the church but to emancipate it from the authority of the Word, is simply the logical conclusion of Luther's disjunction between spirit and matter, soul and body. As a matter of fact, Luther did not overcome and escape the dualism of Rome. In making this judgment, the author does not excuse Calvinism from responsibility for the modern curse of secularism or mean to suggest that one ought to draw the robes of self-complacency tightly about himself in smug detachment. It is, indeed, a sad reflection on the impotence of Calvinism that it has not been able successfully to oppose the onrush of secularism in modern life with its development of a godless culture. As a result, today there is no true sense of calling but an emphasis on creativity for its own sake. This gives us form without content – abstractionism. Technocracy proclaims production to be the goal of economic man in order to satisfy his appetites, which has a dehumanizing effect. "The detachment of culture from Christianity produced the fatally erroneous belief that culture or creativity needs no subordination to a higher unit, but can live on its own resources."[5]

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[4] E. Brunner, *Op. cit.*, Vol. I, p. 145.

It is exactly at this critical point that the Calvinistic conception of Christian vocation is the cure for modern dehumanized secularism. For Calvinism denies that the meaningful unity of human existence lies in human resources but points to the divine creative will of God as the source of human meaning. Calvinism does not succumb to scientism. It will not allow that science has competence in the realm of ends. For science can only describe the facts, the meaning of which must be ascertained from revelation. Hence the emancipation of the modern mind from the Christian revelation constitutes the nemesis of modern culture. The sad results are everywhere evident: the worship of knowledge of nature and the denial of the supernatural, *scientism*; the worship of the beautiful for its own sake and the denial of any moral or spiritual considerations in expressing its ideal, *aestheticism*; the worship of power for its own sake and the denial of every human value for the sake of the state's supremacy, *totalitarianism!* It ought to be apparent that the cultural degeneration due to the proclamation of human autonomy is most striking in modern forms of political totalitarianism, since the state possesses the power of the sword to force all those within its borders to accept its definition of the meaning of life and to brain-wash the dissenters.

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[5] *Op cit.,* p. 153.

Small wonder that Americans in general have turned with horrified indignation against the dictators, who personified this ultimate of dehumanized culture resulting from the denial of man's calling under God. But spiritually and culturally Americans, who suffer from scientism and aestheticism, are just as wicked in the sight of God and just as far from achieving a meaningful existence as the Germans or the Russians under Hitler and Stalin respectively. The same evil is apparent in the sports craze of the modern world. Playing the game is no longer a means unto an end, namely, relaxation and recreation so that the player can go back to his work refreshed and reinvigorated and so fulfill his calling, but it has become for millions an end in itself. Men work in order to play, just as they live in order to eat. This is turning the order of nature topsy-turvy. This constitutes a denial of God's cultural mandate and his claim to the service of man in this world. Against this attitude of modern culture, the Calvinist would utter a vehement protest and recall his fellow-citizens to the biblical doctrine that every person has a divine calling in life to serve his creator. Such service gives man a sense of exhilaration and release, for the Christ who calls men to that pristine glory of being children and servants of the most high has said, "Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall set you free"!

CHAPTER XVI

CALVINISTIC CULTURE AND COMMON GRACE

The terms "culture" and "common grace" have assumed a very close relationship in Reformed circles, as a result of Dr. A. Kuyper's monumental work — *De Gemeene Gratie.*[1] At least two generations of Calvinists have been subjected to the dictum of Kuyper that common grace is the foundation of culture. Kuyper based his idea on the assumption that creation would have returned to the void unless God in his common grace intervened to sustain it; thus the creative will is now achieved through common grace. Common grace does not merely have a restraining or negative influence but it is also positive and progressive in motivating cultural activity. Culture is a gift of common grace since through it the original powers deposited in nature were brought to fruition. The very antithesis between light and darkness is possible only on the basis of common grace.

A contrary opinion is posited by Dr. K. Schilder, who practically nullifies the influence of common grace as a culturally creative power. He would rather ascribe the development of culture to the providence of God. As such it forms the background for the working out of God's decree concerning the elect and the reprobate. History with its culture is the presupposition for the great struggle between light and darkness.

For an orientation to this difficult problem, the reader is referred back to the historical section as it dealt with the thought of Calvin, Kuyper, and Schilder. Furthermore, the subject of common grace is closely related to that of the antithesis, the kingship of Christ, the Christian's calling in the world, and his estimate of the world as such. The further discussion on this thorny question proceeds on the assumption that neither Kuyper nor Schilder nor the Christian Reformed Church in its official pronouncement at the Synod of Kalamazoo in 1924 have said the last word with respect to it. Neither is what follows here to be considered as an attempt on the part of the author to solve this vexing theological problem. This would be presumptuous. However, to say that one is in accord with the decisions of the Synod of Kalamazoo,[2] namely, that there is a certain favor of God to all his creatures, that there is a restraint of sin in the life of the individual and of society, and that the unregenerate can perform civic righteousness, does not imply that further study and development of this doctrine are superfluous. As a matter of fact, the three points were not considered as constituting the whole doctrine of common grace by the Kalamazoo Synod, which recommended that the entire church should make a further study of the disputed doctrine and carry on an extended discussion concerning the problems involved in it.[3] To implement this purpose, an attempt will be made to discuss the doctrine of common grace relative to its implications for the fulfillment of the cultural mandate.

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[1] Cf. General bibliography and chapter eight for a closer description and characterization of this monumental work.

There are two extremes that ought to be avoided, namely, the view of Kuyper that common grace is the foundation of culture and history, and the conception of K. Schilder, which denies the relevance of common grace for the cultural enterprise altogether. Both of these positions lack scriptural support. Kuyper resorts to theological speculation when he maintains that except for common grace the world would have fallen apart, as a vase breaks into shivers when one removes its support. God's plan could not thus be frustrated by Satan, for his decree is immutable (Mal. 3:6; Isa. 46:10; Ps. 33:11; etc.) . Besides, the decree included all things that come to pass (Eph. 1:11) , also the sin of our first parents, which constituted the fall of the human race. But there is no biblical evidence, or at least none has been adduced, to the effect that the fall, which resulted in the ethical alienation of man from his creator, has changed the ontological relationship of creation to its source. Sin did not threaten the world with non-being or a return to a chaos *a la* Tillich and the Existentialists. Man was not changed into an animal or a demon;

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[2] Three Points of Common Grace:

"A. Concerning the first point, touching *the favorable attitude of God to mankind in general and not only toward the elect,* Synod declares that according to Scripture and Confession, it is certain that, in addition to the saving grace of God displayed to the elect unto eternal life, there is also a certain favor or grace (*een zekere gunst of genade*) of God which He shows to his creatures in general."

"B. Concerning the second point, touching *the restraint of sin in the life of the individual and of society,* Synod declares that according to Scripture and Confession there is such a restraint of sin."

"C. Concerning the third point, touching *the performance of so-called civic righteousness by the unregenerate,* Synod declares that according to Scripture and Confession the unregenerate, although unable to do any saving good (*Canons of Dort,* III and IV, art. 4) can perform such civic good."
The proofs cited from Scripture and Confession and Reformed writers have not been included for the sake of saving space (cf. *Acts of Synod,* 1924 in loco).

[3] Cf. Fred H. Klooster, "The Synodical Decisions of 1924 on Common Grace," *Torch and Trumpet* (Nov. 1958), Vol. VIII.

he is still a little lower than God (Ps. 8) and he still stands in the relationship of image-bearer, so that he has dominion over the works of God, has the ability to bring to fruition and to exploit the riches of the earth. And God bestowed this blessing upon Adam and Eve, who in faith received the promise of the Seed that would crush the Serpent's head. Is this comman grace? Definitely not! God did not abandon his original world; rather he had an eternal purpose to restore it in Christ, the Son of his love, in whom the seed of the woman has been predestinated from before the foundation of the world (Eph. 1:4). This has been the Reformed emphasis, for example of Prof. H. Bavinck in his Christocentric view of culture. For in Christ all things are reconciled to God (Col. 1:20) and shall be brought into unity under his headship (Eph. 1:10). For God in grace restores the original creation; hence culture and grace are never antithetical. Man is not only converted from his nature as sinful by grace, but must again in the state of grace return unto nature as the creation of God.[4] The cultural action of believers cannot possibly be construed a *common grace operation* on this basis, but is simply the restoration to man's creation calling through the restoration in Christ. To say that the world continues its existence due to the common grace of God is to put the cart before the horse, since God gave his promises to our first parents and also to Noah on the basis of his purpose to redeem the world in and through Jesus Christ.

The tendency of Kuyper to think of creation as falling into nothingness is not in the best tradition of Calvinistic thought. It rather fits into Roman Catholic theology, which "thinks of the creature as beginning as it were from the borders of non-being. There is according to Roman theology in man, as in created reality generally, an inherent tendency to sink back into non-existence. Hence the need of supernatural aid from the outset of man's being. There is in the Roman theology a confusion between the metaphysical and the ethical aspects of man's being. If there is any one thing on which Bavinck has laid great stress throughout the four volumes of his *Dogmatiek*, it is that true Protestantism is a matter of restoring man, the creature to God, to his true ethical relationship with God. The destructive tendency of sin is not to be seen in a gradual diminution of man's rationality and morality. Man is not less a creature, a rational and moral creature of God when he turns his back to God and hates his maker than he was before. Therefore when God gives to man his grace, his saving grace, this does not reinstate his rationality and morality. It reinstates his *true* knowledge, righteousness, and holiness (Col. 3:10; Eph. 4:24). It restores man *ethically,* not metaphysically. So, too, if we take common grace to be that which has to do with the restraint of sin, then it is an ethical not a metaphysical function that it performs. It does not maintain . . . the creatural characteristics of man."[5] When God promised the Seed to crush the serpent's head, he also promised to the woman that she would fulfill the mandate to replenish the earth by procreation and to man the power to belabor the earth so that it would bring forth food, albeit with pain to the woman and with the punitive presence of thorns and thistles to the man.

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[4] G. Brillenburg Wurth, "Bavinck en de Cultuur," *Bezinning*, Vol. IX, No. 12 (Dec. 1954), p. 286.

However, Satan could not destroy God's work or his plan for the created world, for God restrains both Satan and unregenerate sinners.[6] This restraint is due to the grace of God in Christ to the elect primarily, but is also construed in Reformed theology as grace to unregenerated sinners. However, it would seem an unwarranted assumption to maintain that the world would have fallen apart without common grace, or that the latter makes culture possible. There certainly is no scriptural warrant for holding that "the created powers of the universe themselves tended to disappear into nothingness and have to be kept in existence through common grace."[7]

Common grace, then, must not be identified with the power or will of God which keeps the universe in being, or such power, as needed in maintaining the constitutive nature or original relation of man to his Maker as image-bearer, but rather as an ethical attitude on the part of God to mankind "by which man is restrained from fully expressing his enmity toward his Creator or his fellow-man, and whereby he is enabled to perform certain moral actions. These may be denominated 'good' in the relative sense in which Scripture applies that term to the approved actions of unregenerate sinners" (*Ibid.,* p. 38). Besides, the divine gifts which men received from their creator in the beginning as a token of his love and favor and which are now continued after the fall may be said to be evidences of "grace" since they are given in spite of demerit and hostility on the part of the recipient. For God sends his rain and sunshine on the just and the unjust and maketh his sun to rise on the evil and the good – he is kind toward the unthankful and evil (Matt. 5:45; Luke 6:35).

This grace is not common in the sense that all man *share in it alike,* but because it concerns the ordinary blessings of life, dealing with the natural and the usual. Over against it there is the uncommon, unusual, extraordinary grace, which we call "special," which God bestows upon the elect in Jesus Christ. In Christ the believers receive all things for body and soul, for Jesus assures them that they must seek his kingdom because the heavenly Father knows that they have need of all those things which the Gentiles seek. At no time do Scripture or the Confessions assume that believers have all things common with the world except their salvation, but they are to pray for all things needful for body and soul. "In nothing be anxious; but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanks let your requests be made known unto God" (Phil. 4:6), "And my God shall supply every need of yours according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus" (vs. 19). Such language is undeniable. Besides, all the Old Testament testifies to the fact that God had a special care for his covenant people. And in the New Testament Christ represents the Father as willing to hear the prayers of his people for their every need for time and eternity for Christ's sake (cf. John 14:13, 14).

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[5] Cornelius Van Til, *A Letter on Common Grace* (Phillipsburg, N. J., n.d.), pp. 36, 37.

[6] John Calvin, *Institutes* (II, 3, 3).

[7] C. Van Til, *op. cit.,* p. 38.

However, the rejection of Kuyper's extreme position does not commit one necessarily to the Schilderian radicalism of nullifying, or perhaps denying, the relevance of common grace for culture altogether. Whereas Kuyper speculates on the basis of some scriptural data which he relates to culture, Schilder denies the relevance of this data altogether for the cultural enterprise. This is equally disastrous for the Reformed principle that calls on all of us to be led by the Word of God. For Schilder denies that there is any attitude of favor at any stage of history on the part of God to those who are "vessels of wrath." In this respect Schilder contradicts the Calvinistic tradition. For Calvin himself explains the lives of those who were devoted to virtue among the unregenerate on the basis of God's grace — "But we ought to consider that, notwithstanding of the corruption of our nature, there is *some room for divine grace, such grace,* as without purifying it may lay it under internal restraint. For, did the Lord let every mind loose to wanton in its lusts, doubtless there is not a man who would not show that his nature is capable of all the crimes with which Paul charges it" (*Institutes,* II, 3, 3, italics added). Then, after having shown what sin would develop to without this restraining grace of God, Calvin goes on, "In the elect, God cures these diseases in a mode which will shortly be explained; in others, he only lays them under such restraint as may prevent them from breaking forth to a degree incompatible with the preservation of the established order of things. Hence, how much soever men may disguise their impurity, some are restrained only by shame, others by fear of the laws, from breaking out into many kinds of wickedness. Some aspire to an honest life, as deeming it most conducive to their interest, while others are raised above the vulgar lot, that, by the dignity of their station, they may keep inferiors to their duty. Thus God, by his providence, curbs the perverseness of nature, preventing it from breaking forth into action, without yet rendering it inwardly pure" *(Ibid.)*. Furthermore, Calvin discusses the common phenomenon of the difference between a Cataline and a Camillus, the latter having received special divine gifts so that he is distinguished and seems entitled to commendation because of his superb qualities. However, Calvin does not draw that conclusion but holds that even "those endued with the greatest talents were always impelled by the greatest ambition (a stain which defiles all virtues, and makes them lose all favour in the sight of God), so we cannot set any value on anything that seems praiseworthy in ungodly men. We may add, that the principle part of rectitude is wanting when there is no zeal for the glory of God, and there is no such zeal in those whom he has not regenerated by his Spirit" (*Ibid.*, II, 3, 4).

Calvin, then, clearly considers the restraint of sin and the special gifts that some men have above others an evidence of a grace on the part of God, which is to be distinguished from that grace by which he heals the malady of sin in the elect. And although it is by the providence of God that sin is curbed, this does not remove the gracious character of God's action as Schilder avers. For it is the Spirit of God, who fills, moves and invigorates all men and things, according to the law of creation. And the greater excellence of the one over the other is due to the fact that "in a common nature the grace of God is specially displayed in passing by many, and thus proclaiming that it is under obligation to none. We may add, that each individual is brought under particular influences according to his calling" (*Ibid.*, II, 2, 17). Here Calvin teaches that all men have a calling from God irrespective of predestination to life or death. Even profane literature has a calling in the realm of common grace. Calvin therefore urges Christians to use the contributions of the impious concerning inferior things since they are also produced by the Spirit of God, who is the only fountain of truth. "Therefore, since it is manifest that men whom the Scriptures term natural, are so acute and clear-sighted in the investigation of inferior things, their example should teach us how many gifts the Lord has left in possession of human nature, notwithstanding of its having been despoiled of the true good" (*Ibid.*, II, 3, 15).

Thus Calvin argues for a *certain grace* of God to unregenerate sinners bestowed in history. Thereby they are enabled to do that which is relatively good, and they discover much truth concerning inferior things. Hence providence is not pure prolongation, or merely scaffolding for the building of special grace, but God displays his longsuffering mercy and goodness in history.[8] Schilder, on the other hand, is guilty of univocal reasoning when he argues that there is no sense in which the cultural process of mankind displays the grace of

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[8] G. J. Berkouwer, *De Voorzienigheid Gods* (Kampen, 1950), pp. 81ff.

God to the unregenerate. For he applies our human standards of logic to the mind and heart of God without discrimination, when he states that God cannot show any love or grace toward the unregenerate since the non-elect are the objects of the wrath of God. To this latter point he is able to marshal much Scripture evidence, but he denies the relevance of the scriptural evidence for the love, kindness and mercy of God toward man as unregenerate sinner.

This type of reasoning has its counterpart in the procedure of the Arminians in general who believe in universal atonement. These maintain that there is no qualitative difference between the favor of God toward the saved and the unsaved; since God calls all men promiscuously in Christ. The difference lies in the response of individual men, which is a matter of absolute liberty to accept or reject the love of God, irrespective of the counsel of God. For the Arminian the love of God is frustrated by the intransigence of the sinner, since God loves all men promiscuously. But, in saying that there is no sense in which God can show favor to the reprobate, one applies the same kind of univocal reasoning to the actions of God. In either case God is caught in the net of man's logic.

So then, since Kuyper goes beyond Scripture in his speculation concerning common grace as the *raison d'etre* of culture, and Schilder will not go as far as the Scriptures in recognizing common grace as an actuality by which reprobate sinners are restrained and receive innumerable gifts from the divine beneficence, it would seem that the golden mean between these extremes must be sought. We must return at this point to the method of Calvin himself, who abhorred speculation as the plague and at the same time obediently set forth all the counsel of God.[9]

Scripture, indeed, teaches that the natural man is alienated from God. He is said to be without God and without hope in the world (Eph. 2:12). On the other hand, he also knows God (Rom. 1:21) in virtue of his having been created in the image of God and his continued covenantal relationship to his Maker, which we denominate as the religious relationship.[10] Consequently, we may say that man as sinner has an ineradicable sense of deity. And, although man in the state of sin hates God and is not subject to the law of God, yet by virtue of God's restraining grace he is able to do good. Fallen man has not been able to deny his relationship as offspring of God (Acts 17:28), and as such he is a cultural creature, capable of modal obedience.[11] Although it is true that man as religious being expresses the apostacy of his heart by serving idols instead of the living God, yet he may function normally in procreating children, in thinking according to the laws of logic, in creating that which is beautiful in architecture, painting, literature, etc. Although the entire life of the unbeliever is directed toward the *left* – away from God, there are pagan and unbelieving parents who function properly in both the biological and the moral modalities in bringing forth children and loving them as such. On the other hand, believers whose lives are directed toward God in covental obedience, nevertheless violate the temporal laws of God for his creation. There are believing mothers who refuse to bear children, believing fathers who provoke their children to wrath; believing citizens who are unduly conservative and oppose the historical norm of cultural development; believing students who have bad manners or disregard the rights of ordinary people; believing professors who make errors in thinking, etc. "Sin in the ethical sphere is disobedience to the norm of love; in the social, it is the violation of social norms by considering only oneself; in the historical, it is the opposition to the norm of culture which is found in conservatism, reaction and revolution. . . . The sinner . . . distorts all cosmic relations and brings disharmony in all the coherences or relationships which God has instituted and ordained in His world."[12] However, because of God's restraint of sin, unregenerate men are able to use the good gifts of God for the exploitation of the universe and the development of the powers placed at their disposal by God, the creator. Thus the race has multiplied, the earth has been dominated by man and developed according to the cultural mandate given at creation. It must be maintained, therefore, that culture remains culture even though it is God-defying culture, and art remains art even though it becomes demonic.[13]

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[9] This is clear from his exposition of such doctrines as Christian Liberty and Predestination (*Institutes,* III, 19-23).

[10] G. J. Berkouwer, *De Algemeene Openbaring* (Kampen, 1951), Ch. VII, pp. 107-26. Cf. also C. Van Til, *Defense of the Faith* (Philadelphia ,1955), pp. 107-12; pp. 171-75; cf. *Institutes,* I, 5, 2; I, 3, 1 and 3; IV, 1.

However, the recognition of this fact may lead to a dangerous misinterpretation of the doctrine of common grace. For one thing, common grace is often separated from the work of Christ as Mediator. This tendency is found in A. Kuyper himself, as we have noted in the chapter dealing with his views. Thus a dualism is established between creation and redemption, which is intolerable.[14] This is reminiscent of the natural theology of Roman Catholicism and the disjunction between reason and faith. As a consequence there are those who separate religion and culture, with the result that the universal kingship of Christ over every sphere of life is no longer a live option. Furthermore, the militant character of the church and its relevance for contemporary culture is lost.

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[11] Cf. J. M. Spier, *An Introduction to Christian Philosophy* (Philadelphia, 1954), pp. 116-22. Note: The term "modality" as used in this context refers to one of the many aspects of human life from the objective, law side. Man as creature functions in the numerical, spatial, physical, biotic, psychical, analytical, historical, linguistic, social, economic, aesthetic, juridical, ethical and the pistical (aspect of faith) modalities.

[12] Spier, *op. cit.*, pp. 119, 120.

[13] A. Kuyper, *Pro Rege* III (Amsterdam, 1911), p. 579.

[14] S. G. De Graaf, *Christus en de Wereld* (Kampen, n.d.), pp. 91-113. H. Dooyeweerd, *A New Critique of Theoretic Thought* (Philadelphia, 1953), I, pp. 523-24; III, p. 506-08; 523-26. *Vide supra,* chapter eight, footnote on Hodge.

Another danger that ought to be signalized at this juncture is the denial of the pervasiveness of the antithesis on the basis of the doctrine of common grace as the foundation of culture. But the confession of the relevance of the doctrine of common grace for culture does not involve logically the denial of the pervasiveness of the antithesis. Dr. Kuyper himself was the most outspoken and brilliant champion for both. On the one hand, common grace as the *favorable attitude of God to mankind in general, restraint of sin,* and the *performance of civic righteousness by the unregenerate* forms the substratum, or condition, on which spiritual warfare between the seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent can be waged. If the longsuffering of God (Jonah 4:2, 11; II Peter 3:4) in bearing with man's wickedness, and the kindness of God (Luke 6:36) in giving his gifts to the unthankful and evil were not a reality, how could the unregenerate portion of mankind exist to carry on the warfare? On the other hand, the antithesis is part of the covenant of grace in which Jehovah promised fallen man a Deliverer to crush the Serpent's head. This forms the leitmotif of all special revelation. Common grace has no independent goal apart from the coming of the kingdom of God through Christ, the second Adam. Christ is the key to history and to culture. At least, the sacred record of God's self-revelation does not present us with a dual purpose in God's providence – namely, that of culture on the foundation of common grace and the kingdom as fruit of special grace in and through Christ. The whole of the Old Testament points forward to and contributes to the coming of the Son of God in the flesh; but in the New the eschatological outlook of the consummation of all things in the Second Advent and the establishment of the kingdom in glory is the central, throbbing theme. Common grace is certainly in the service of special grace which is tantamount to saying it is in service of the anthithesis. For God's revelation of his grace in Jesus Christ evokes the opposition of the world; it calls forth the reaction of hatred, because the world knows not God neither the children of God. And every one that would live godly will suffer persecution (II Tim. 3:12). It is the grace of God that causes men to live godly lives, but this results in persecution – an evidence of the antithesis.

Furthermore, there is danger in ascribing to the common grace of God the communication of the natural blessings of life to the regenerate along with the unregenerate. It is passing strange that men have not ascribed the restraint of sin in believers to common grace;[15] neither are the redeemed lumped with the unregenerate under the third point of the Synod of Kalamazoo — viz., doing civil good. All the good works of a believer are the result of God's grace in Christ, yet the ordinary blessing and gifts of life are said, by many, to come to all men from the promiscuous beneficence of God. This creates the illusion, which is gaining ground in some quarters, that the Christian is functioning in two realms; one, which includes his earthly and cultural pursuits, and the other, providing a way of salvation and pertaining to the religious aspects of life. Thus the medieval opposition between nature and grace again looms large. The church formerly was able, however, to simulate a kind of unity through its doctrine of the sacraments which sanctified the whole of life. But with the modern rejection of the church as arbiter between culture and religion, the result has been that the authority of the Word has been rejected in every domain of life. One cannot stave off this dire consequence when he compartmentalizes life into two terrains, one functioning under special and the other under common grace. Religion becomes a Sunday affair, helping one over the rough spots in life and insuring one's well-being at death; however, it has no relevance for the red-blooded, realistic existence of the work-a-day world. One makes his living and eats his daily bread and engages in the cultural enterprise simply as man, under common grace. In this area one may enjoy himself together with his fellow-men, for are not the blessings of God common to all: hence one must learn to appreciate and enjoy what his fellow-men accomplish in this area of common grace. The idea of the antithesis is wholly foreign to this cultural mind.

This two-terrain doctrine is not only contrary to the teachings of the Word,[16] but it is actually also very dangerous in practice, since it leads to a tolerant neutralism and makes men indifferent to the demands of the Christian warfare. As a matter of fact, an active state of belligerency between the forces of light and darkness is often denied by those who advocate this type of common grace philosophy. Thus the good fight of faith to which the apostle Paul urges God's children is confined to the innerchamber, the prayer cell, and the secret imaginings of the heart. The great spiritual warfare, in which there can be no compromise, between Christ and Belial, light and darkness, believer and unbeliever, is either ignored or denied. By implication the pervasive character of regeneration is also denied, for, since believers are functioning as common men in the realm of common grace they are on neutral ground. Here, it is said, the radical antithesis of a reconciliation of all things through Christ simply does not apply. Thus the mediatorial kingship of Christ is in jeopardy, and the militant character of the church as organism becomes ineffective.

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[15] Calvin, *Institutes,* II, 3, 3, where Calvin distinguishes between the special grace of God whereby he heals the malady of sin in the elect, and that grace which he exercises to restrain the wicked from their ebullitions.

[16] Cf. I John 3:15-17, where the apostle makes an absolute prohibition against loving the world, warning that those who love the world do not have the love of the Father.

It would seem that one of the chief causes of this difficulty is the fact that the term "common" has not been carefully defined. It makes a great deal of difference whether one applies the qualitative or quantitative connotation. If the latter connotation is applied to grace, it would mean that God gives his favor to all indiscriminately in the sending of sunshine and rain upon the evil and the good, that the preaching of the Gospel is proof that God's favor is promiscuous, and that the restraint of sin and the power to perform civil good is also due to common grace in both regenerate and unregenerate. However, when grace is used in the qualitative sense it refers to the ordinary, the natural and the usual as compared with the extraordinary. Hence the grace we call common dispenses the ordinary gifts of life and health, sunshine and rain to those who are unthankful, since God is kind to his enemies. But he gives himself in love and fellowship to his children so that they have no need to ask, "What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed? For after all these things do the Gentiles seek; for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things . . . and all these things shall be added unto you" (Matt. 6:31-33). Is it not crystal clear that the believers are under the special providence and grace of God in the whole of their lives?

However, there are those who have a different conception of commonality. By it they mean that all men share alike under the common grace of God in the natural blessings of sunshine and rain; they have everything in common up to a certain point. The ordinary things of life together with human nature with its gifts of reason, appreciation for beauty, etc., are universally received and given without discrimination. For God loves men promiscuously, and we must follow his example by not drawing a line between saints and sinners in the common things of life. We must learn to enjoy and appreciate the common culture, without dragging the antithesis into the picture. An illustration at this point may not be amiss. Think of a Wyoming rancher who runs his riding horses together with his cattle. But in one corner of that open ranch there is a corral specially designed for feeding his horses a ration of protein and a vitamin fortified diet, to keep them in condition for hard service. This is horse heaven. They have the range in common with all the other livestock, but here is "special grace." Some such concept seems to be prevalent in many circles. As a result, there is a certain level of existence at which the army of the Lord is immobilized, where it does not function as an army, but suddenly takes on the appearance of crowds of vacationers, or the motley multitude at a fair and pushing one another for a better position to see. Thus there is established between the church and the world a grey, colorless area, a kind of no man's land, where an armistice obtains and one can hobnob with the enemy with impunity in a relaxed Christmas spirit, smoking the common weed.[17]

One of the tragic results of such a common grace "philosophy" is a false cultural optimism and a glorification of the natural man and his achievement. Here the process is reversed, that is, the Christian is not made common because he shares in common grace, but the pagan is made Christian because he shares in Christ. The logic is quite simple. Since all truth is a gift of the Spirit of Christ and Plato did speak some truth, therefore Plato was a Christian because he shared in the truth of which Christ is the source. But, he was a "common grace Christian" since he did not have saving faith. At the same time the "special grace Christian" is identified with ascetic, world-denying fundamentalism. Thus a false antithesis is created between Christianity and culture. As a matter of fact, some advocates of this type of thinking believe that Christianity has been destructive of the fine cultural spirit and achievements of the "common grace Christians" of the ancient world. They, furthermore, have a keen sense of mission to liberate the Church from such narrow-minded leadership.[18] Is it any wonder that both worldliness and compromise characterize the church in our day. The Calvinistic concept of Christian calling is forgotten, the kingship of Christ is ignored in the realm of culture; and the idea of the antithesis is laughed out of court.

No doubt one reason for this ignoble retreat from the Calvinistic concept of culture is the fact that the advocates of the common grace variety of Christianity expressed by Plato have not actually read Calvin to the end. Others are not spiritual sons of Calvin and the Reformation, but they are in love with the spirit of the Renaissance, with its faith in reason and its glorification of man. If the prophets of this "common grace Christianity" had merely read *Institutes,* II, 16 as well as paragraph 18, they would have understood that Calvin does not support their conclusions. For although the Spirit dispenses most excellent gifts "to whom he will for the common benefit of mankind," that does not mean that such beneficiaries of the gifts of the Spirit can claim relationship to the Son of God. "Nor is there any reason for inquiring what intercourse with the Spirit is enjoyed by the impious, who are entirely alienated from God. For when the Spirit of God is said to dwell only in the faithful, that is to be understood of the Spirit of sanctification, by whom we are consecrated as temples to God himself. Yet it is equally by the energy of the same Spirit, that God replenishes, actuates, and quickens all creatures, and that, according to the property of each species which he has given it by the law of creation" (*Institutes,* II, 2, 16).

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[17] The reference is to the hobnobbing of Allied and Axis forces during the first world war, when men relaxed during Christmas holiday and smoked cigarettes with their enemies.

[18] The reference to Plato as "common grace Christian" is from a chapel speech by a pre-seminary student in a Christian College.

It ought to be clear from the above and other like passages that Calvin cannot be hitched to the wagon of the "common grace Christianity" of the cultural optimists. Calvin would never have confounded heaven and hell by calling Plato a Christian. He always distinguished the regenerating, sanctifying power of the Holy Spirit, by which men are made partakers of Christ, from the general influence of the Holy Spirit by which men are empowered to have dominion over the earth. All Calvin is saying in this connection is that we ought not to despise the truth which God has revealed, no matter where it may be found, lest we be guilty of sloth, and of ingratitude to God who is the Giver of such gifts to men. But he always distinguishes between knowledge of inferior and of superior things. True knowledge of man, the universe and of God comes only through the Word. What may be known in medicine, mathematics and dialectics, and other similar sciences from pagan sources is truly a revelation of God and a gift of the Spirit, and freed from superstition, must be transplanted into Christian philosophy. Moreover, Calvin believed that liberal education may not be divorced from man's goal in life, namely, understanding the Scriptures in order to do the will of God.[19]

Now there are those who would say that one may call Plato a "Christian" (although he receives secondary status under the "common grace" nomenclature) if one allows the advocates of the idea their assumptions. But that is just exactly the point at issue. The assumption seems to be that all men share in Christ, but that there is merely a quantitative difference. Those who are regenerated have more of Christ than those whose minds are merely enlightened by the Logos so that they know the truths of science and philosophy. Apart from the dubious speculation concerning the Logos, which Calvin does not support with his doctrine when he says that the Spirit replenishes, actuates and quickens all creatures according to their property of each species (*Op. cit.,* II, 2, 16), this runs contrary to biblical usage and the doctrines of the church. According to

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[19] Cf. Calvin's view of education as set forth in chapter seven. For a more detailed evaluation of the place and importance of pagan learning as Calvin saw it, his *Commentry on I Corinthians* may be consulted.

Scripture and church history, a man was called a "Christian" when he confessed to belief in Christ as the Son of God and as his Saviour from sin. And the Reformed churches define the Christian as one who is "a member of Christ by faith, and thus (a) partaker of his anointing,"[20] which corresponds to the words of the Lord to his disciples that he is the vine and they are the branches (John 15:1-4). To call Plato a Christian then, constitutes a denial of history, is a rejection of Christian revelation and doctrine, and ought to be rejected as a eggregious abuse of language. For thereby the line of demarcation between the world and the church is wiped out and the antithesis goes into the limbo of forgotten superstitions, or at best is rated as a hobby of some fanatics in the church, who are culturally barbarians. But such levity with words is blasphemy against the Son and those to whom the Son reveals the Father (Matt. 11:27). But it also is an insult to the Father, who warns us that if someone abideth not in the teaching of Christ, he hath not God (II John 9).

There are also those who would make the doctrine of common grace as they understand it, namely, that God loves all men anteriorly and preveniently as well as promiscuously, the real motivation for doing mission work.[21] A more eggregious theological error is hard to imagine. For God does not save men on the basis of his general benevolence. And the transcending love of God in Christ for the elect by which he draws men from darkness into his marvelous light is not an extension of his promiscuous benignity to all men. Neither is there any evidence that God or his Son, who founded the Christian church, ever sent out missionaries on the basis of his general benevolence. On the other hand, Paul confesses that it is the love of Christ that constrains him. This love made the Son leave his home in glory for our sakes to come into the world to save sinners, of which Paul confesses himself to be chief (I Tim. 1:15). The real motivation for missionary endeavor is the command of the risen exalted Lord, "Go ye." And subjectively men are moved because of God's love for them exhibited in Christ's death on Calvary, by which they have become children of God. Men are moved by their deep gratitude for personal salvation and the sense of obedience, not by some promiscuous love for all men based on the promiscuous love of God toward all his rational creatures. Through the foolishness of preaching God saves them that believe, but this Gospel preached by Paul is foolishness to the Greeks and a stumbling-block to the Jews, but to those who are called it is the power of God and the wisdom of God (I Cor. 1:21-24). Although all who hear the Word preached are outwardly called and the "mercy of God is offered equally to those who believe and those who believe not" yet to the latter the Gospel is "but the 'savour of death unto death.' "[22] For the grace of God is illustrated "by this comparison, that he adopts not all promiscuously to the hope of salvation, but gives to some what he refuses to others. Ignorance of the principle evidently detracts from the Divine glory, and diminishes real humility" (*Institutes,* III, 21, 1). There are those who reason that "the universality of the promises destroys the discrimination of special grace," but God "lays himself under no positive obligation to call all men alike. . . . Whence it appears, that when the doctrine of salvation is offered to all for their effectual benefits, it is a corrupt prostitution of that which is declared to be reserved particularly for the children of the Church" (*Institutes,* III, 22, 10). But if God does not call all men alike, as Calvin here affirms, where is the commonness of the grace that supposedly is "non-selective, indiscriminate, promiscuous" (*Verduin, Op. cit.,* p. 4)? There is no biblical ground that can be adduced for the position that God sends out his ambassadors on the basis of a promiscuous love which is prevenient to his special electing love in Christ. Neither does the Bible support the view that mission work is to be motivated among men on the ground that God's children must love all men promiscuously, that their love may not be selective. As a matter of fact, whereas God's love is most certainly selective, men cannot distinguish elect from reprobate sinners, hence they are to preach the Gospel to all men indiscriminately. But there is not an iota of biblical proof to be found that such preaching is on the basis of the preacher's promiscuous love for sinners, but rather on the basis of his obedience to the sovereign mandate of his Lord, and because the love of God constrains him (cf. above).

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[20] Cf. *Heidelberg Catechism,* Lord's Day, XII, 32.

[21] L. Verduin, "Does Our Theology Hamper Our Missions," *The Reformed Journal,* June 1958, pp. 3ff.

Neither has the question of common versus special grace anything to do with the attitude of Peter and other "orthodox" Jews in not wishing to go to the Gentiles. Peter had been brought up, just as Paul and the other "orthodox" Jews, on the dogma that salvation is of the Jews and exclusively for the Jews. Now salvation is not a matter of common grace but of the special, elective love of God. However, Peter, in distinction from Paul, was not immediately willing to accept the fact that the old dispensation of particularlism (that Israel was God's chosen people) had come to an end with the exaltation of Christ (cf. John 12:31). But, to say that "the Holy Spirit finally despaired of making a missionary out of him" (*Ibid.,* p. 5) is a gratuitous assumption, not supported by the facts of Scripture. There is no indication that Peter was put on the shelf and Paul chosen in his place. On the contrary, Paul sees Peter as the missionary to the Jews (preaching the same Gospel of the resurrection) and himself as the missionary to the Gentiles (Gal. 2:7-10). The "orthodox" Jews to whom Paul almost lost his life in Jerusalem are not to be identified with Peter's Christian Jewish friends who came from James in Jerusalem and caused him momentarily to deny the principle of freedom from the ceremonial law for Gentile believers.[23] And the entire presentation as though the acceptation of New Testament universalism (the preaching of the Gospel to all nations as opposed to the restriction of the oracles of God to Israel in the Old Testament particularism) has anything to do with common grace is unbiblical and theologically irresponsible.

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[22] Calvin, *Calvin's Calvinism* (London, 1927), tr. Henry Cole, p. 95.

The tentative conclusion, then, at this point is that we ought to affirm the doctrine of "common grace," both as a negative, restraining influence and as a positive power for civic righteousness. However, I prefer to place the term "common grace" in quotation marks, since I do not believe that the beneficent goodness of God to the non-elect sinners is the source of the blessings which God bestows upon elect sinners in and through Jesus Christ, the Mediator.

It is true, no doubt, that God sends sunshine and rain upon the just and the unjust (Matt. 5:44, 45) "for he is kind unto the unthankful and the evil" (Luke 6:35). This kindness the believer must emulate if he would be a child of the heavenly Father. But to those who have the right (privilege) of being called the children of God (John 1:12; I John 3:1) Paul gives the assurance that his "God shall supply all your (their) needs according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus" (Phil. 4:19; cf. also Matt. 6:19-34, where Christ calls on his disciples to seek first the kingdom, since the heavenly Father knows all their temporal and physical needs). In short, the Christian is not merely saved by special grace, but according to the revelation of God receives the fulfillment of all his needs for time and eternity through God's grace in Christ.

Again, the restraint of sin in the non-elect sinner may not be identified with the sanctifying influence of the Holy Spirit, whereby God heals the malady of sin in his elect. Nor is it proper to confound the "good works" (civic righteousness) of the unregenerate with the obedience of faith found in believers. For the saints in light have been created unto good works which were before ordained of God that they should walk in them (Eph. 2:10), by the power of the Spirit mortifying the deeds of the flesh (Rom. 8:13; Gal. 5:16-26).

Hence, there is no commonality of grace between elect and non-elect sinner, which is not to deny the biblical teaching of God's beneficence, love, and kindness to hell-bound, reprobate sinners. However, believers and unbelievers, regenerate and unregenerate sinners, are related in their common creaturehood and in the common curse upon sin, together suffering the thorns and thistles, the cursed ground and the diseases of the body, a nature that is red in tooth and claw. And by nature we were all children of wrath (Eph. 2:3) and were dead in trespasses and sins (vs. 1). This is the commonness that all men have in the first Adam, to whom the Gospel was preached in Paradise.

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[23] Cf. L. Verduin, *op cit.,* p. 5, where Peter's cowardice in the presence of Jewish converts is misrepresented, and Peter identified with the unconverted Jews, who would have killed Paul. But Peter was truly a Missionary (albeit a home missionary in modern parlance) a fact to which his General Epistle to the scattered Hebrew believers is abundant evidence.

Finally, a note of warning ought to be sounded against the abuse and misuse of the doctrine of common grace, as a result of which the consciousness of the antithesis is dulled, the implementation of the confession of Christ's kingship is hamstrung, and the battle cry of the Christian warfare is muted. Thus the concept has gained ground that culture is a neutral enterprise, and the nature of religion as encompassing the totality of life and man's existence is denied. As antidote to this neutralism and the hobnobbing with the enemies of the cross of Christ, let it be remembered that the central theme of the revelation of God in Scripture is the coming of the kingdom "which the God of heaven shall set up . . . which shall never be destroyed, nor shall the sovereignty thereof be left to another people; but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand forever" (Dan. 2:44). For "Worthy is the Lamb that hath been slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and might, and honor, and glory and blessing," for "The kingdom of the world is become the kingdom of our Lord, and of his Christ: and he shall reign for ever and ever" (Rev. 5:12; 11:15). That which was prophesied by Daniel was fulfilled by the incarnation of the Son of God, so that his kingdom is a present reality, exercising power over the hearts and lives of men. Hence Christ is truly the transformer of culture, inasmuch as he transforms the lives of his saints, for everyone that is in Christ Jesus is a new creature (II Cor. 5:17). For a people's religion comes to expression in its culture, and Christians can be satisfied with nothing less than a Christian organization of society.

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